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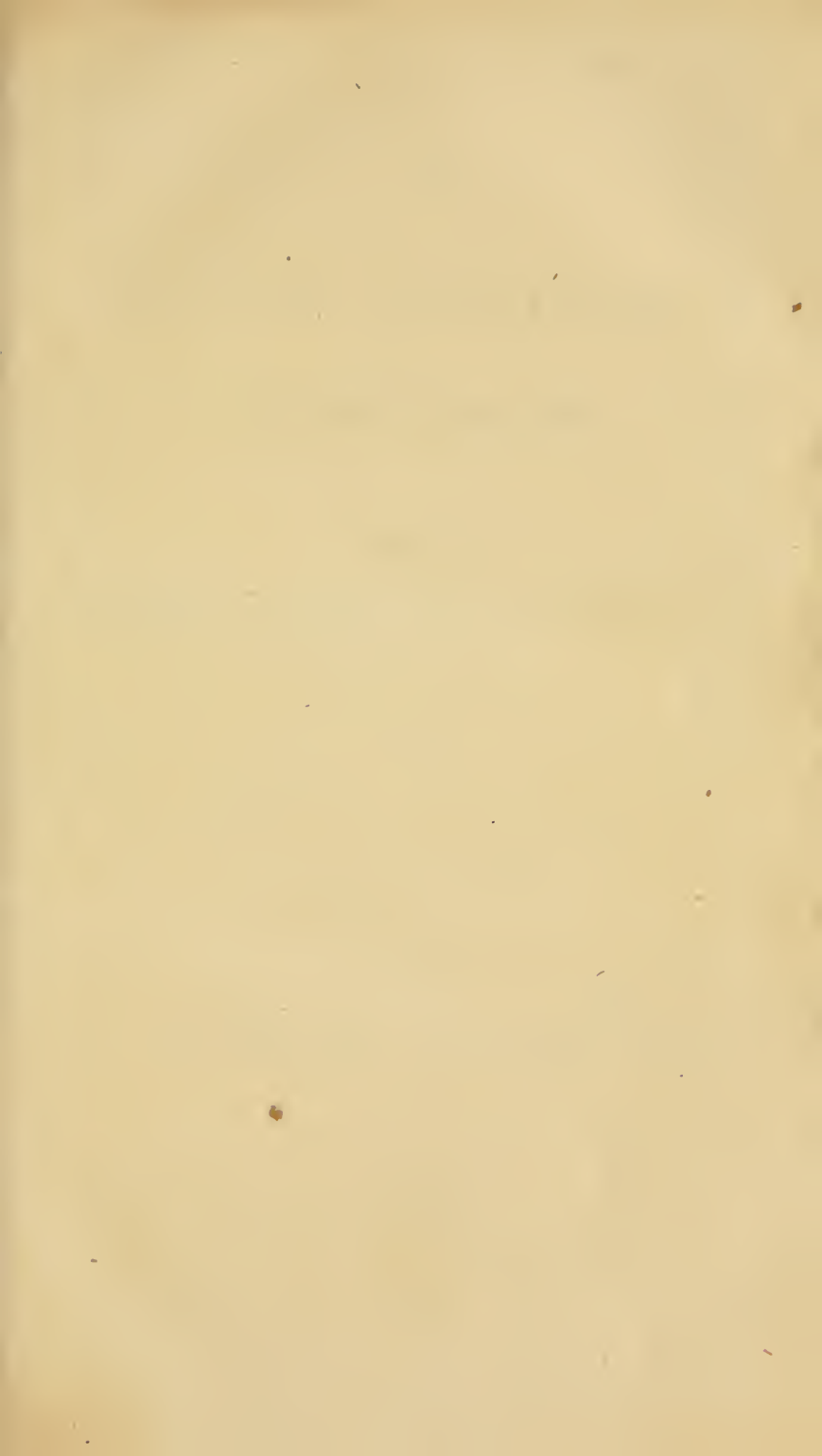
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THE
ACTIVE CHRISTIAN'S
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Containing,

IMMANUEL—COMMUNION WITH GOD—ANGELICAL LIFE,

BY THE REV. S. SHAW.

ALSO,

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST,

BY THE REV. J. FLAVEL.

EDITED

BY THE REV. WILLIAM VINT.

IDLE:

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1830.

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IMMANUEL:
OR, A
DISCOVERY OF TRUE RELIGION,
AS IT IMPORTS A
LIVING PRINCIPLE IN THE MINDS OF MEN.
BY
SAMUEL SHAW.

Memoirs
OF
THE AUTHOR.



THE REV. SAMUEL SHAW, A.M. was born of religious parents at Repton, in Derbyshire, in 1695; and educated at the Free-School there, then the best in that part of England. He went at fourteen years of age to St. John's College, Cambridge, where he was chamber-fellow with Dr. Morton. When he had completed his studies, he went to Tamworth; in Warwickshire, and was usher in the Free-School in 1656. When that reverend person Mr. Blake died, in 1657, Mr. Shaw spoke an eloquent oration at his funeral, after Mr. Anthony Burgess had preached a sermon. They were both printed, and such as have perused them must think a conjunction of three such men, as the deceased and the two speakers, a singular happiness to that neighbourhood. From Tamworth Mr. Shaw removed to Mosely, a small place in the borders of Worcestershire, being invited by Col. Greavis, who showed

him much kindness. On his coming hither, he was ordained by the classical presbytery at Wirksworth; and by the assistance of Mr. Gervas Pigot of Thrumpton, he obtained a presentation from the Protector to the rectory of Long-Whatton, which was in the gift of the crown. He had full possession of this place in June, 1658, and continued in the peaceable enjoyment of it till 1660. Fearing some disturbance in the month of September that year, he got a fresh presentation* under the great seal of England, without much difficulty, as the former incumbent Mr. Henry Robinson was dead, and two more who enjoyed it after him. But though his title was thus corroborated, Sir John Prettyman, by making interest with the lord chancellor, found means to remove Mr. Shaw, about a year before the Act of Uniformity passed; and introduced one Mr. Butler, who had no manner of title to the place. He was a man of such mean qualifications, and so little respected in the parish, that some of them told Sir John, that they heard Mr. Butler had given him a pair of coach-mares to get him the living, but they would give him two pair to get him out, and put Mr. Shaw in again. But he now quitted the church, as he could not satisfy himself to conform to the new terms. He was afterwards

* Copies of both these Presentations may be seen in Calamy.

offered this living without any other condition than re-ordination. But he used to say, He would not lie to God and man, in declaring his presbyterian ordination invalid.

When he left Whatton he removed to Cotes, a small village near Loughborough. Here his family caught the plague of some relations, who came from London to avoid it, about harvest-time in 1665. He then preached in his own house, and afterwards published that excellent book, called *The Welcome to the Plague*, grounded on Amos iv. 12, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." He buried two children, two friends, and one servant of that distemper; but he and his wife survived it; and not being ill both at once, they looked after one another and the rest of the family: which was a great mercy, for none durst come to his assistance. He was in a manner shut up for three months, and was forced not only to attend his sick, but to bury his dead himself in his own garden.*

Towards the latter end of the year 1666, he removed to Ashby-de-la-Zouch in the same county; and was chosen to be the sole master of the free-school in 1668. The revenue was then but small,

* The excellent temper of mind which he expressed under this severe dispensation, is discovered in the above-mentioned work, which is reprinted in vol. i.

the school-buildings quite out of repair, and the number of scholars few. But by his diligence he soon got the salary augmented, not only for himself, but his successors; and by his interest with several gentlemen, he procured money for the building of a good school-house, and a gallery for the scholars in the church. But then he had another difficulty; which was, how to get a licence without subscription to such things as his conscience did not allow of. However, he got over it; for by means of Lord Conway, he obtained from Archbishop Sheldon a licence (which Calamy gives at length), to teach school any where in his whole province; and that without once waiting upon the Archbishop. As he needed a licence also from the bishop of the diocese, he got a friend to make his application to Dr. Fuller, then bishop of Lincoln, who put into his lordship's hands Mr. Shaw's late book occasioned by the plague. The bishop was so much pleased with the piety, peaceableness, humility, and learning there discovered, that he gave him a licence upon such a subscription as his own good sense dictated, and said, that he was glad to have so worthy a man in his diocese upon any terms. He added, that he understood there was another book of his in print, called *Immanuel*, which he desired to see.

Mr. Shaw's learning, piety, and good temper soon

raised the reputation of his school, and the number of his scholars, above any in those parts; having often one hundred and sixty boys or more under his care. His own house and others in the town, were continually full of boarders from London, and other distant parts of the kingdom. Several divines of the Church of England, (v. g. Mr. Sturges of All-Saints in Derby, Mr. Walter Horton, afterwards one of the canons of Lichfield, &c.) and many gentlemen, physicians, lawyers, and others, owed their school-learning to his good instructions. He endeavoured to make the youth under his care, in love with piety; to principle them in religion by his advice, and allure them to it by his good example. His temper was affable, his conversation pleasant and facetious, his method of teaching winning and easy. He had great skill in finding out, and suiting himself to, the tempers of boys. He freely taught poor children, where he saw in them a disposition for learning, and afterwards procured them assistance to perfect their studies at the university. He did indeed excellent service in the work of education; and his school was a great advantage to the trading part of the town.

When the liberty of the Dissenters was settled by act of parliament, he licensed his school-room for a place of worship. The first time he used it,

he preached from Acts xix. 9, “Disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.” He so contrived his meetings, as not to interfere with the establishment, preaching at noon between the services at church, and constantly attending there both parts of the day, with all his scholars, his family, and all his hearers; so that the public assembly was hereby considerably augmented; and the weekly lecture was chiefly attended by him and his scholars. He was upon the most friendly terms with the vicar of the place, and corresponded with Dr. Barlow, the bishop of Lincoln, to whom he presented his book of Meditations, which has been generally esteemed, and read with great profit. Upon which his lordship, who was a great reader, and a good judge of books, wrote him the following letter:—

“My Rev. Brother,

I have received yours, and this comes (with my love and respects) to bring you thanks for the rational and pious book you so kindly sent me. Though my businesses be many, and my infirmities more, being now past 74, yet I have read all your book, and some parts of it more than once, with great satisfaction and benefit. For in your meditations of the love of God and the world, I am neither afraid nor unwilling to confess it, and make

you my confessor,) you have instructed me in several things, which I knew not before, or at least considered not so seriously, and so often as I might and ought. One great occasion or cause why we love our gracious God less, and the world more than we should, is want of knowledge, or consideration. God himself, Isa. i. 2, 3, complains of this, and calls heaven and earth to witness the justice of his complaint. "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." It is strange, and yet most true, that the ox and ass, irrational and stupid creatures, should know their masters, who feed and take care of them, and yet men, rational creatures, even Israel, God's only church and people, whom he had miraculously preserved and nourished, should neither know nor consider. This consideration is our duty, and the want of it our sin; a sin of omission, and therefore it is no wonder if it be a moral cause and occasion of some consequent sin of commission; so that the best men by reason of the old man, and the remains of corruption in them may, and many times do sin, and come short of fulfilling the law and doing their duty, when they want this consideration, or such a degree and measure of it as is required to the moral

goodness of an action. Suppose a man tempted to commit adultery, murder, perjury, or any such sin; if such a man would seriously consider the nature of the sin he is going to commit, that it is a transgression of the law of God, to whom he owes all he has, both for life and livelihood, that it pollutes his soul, that it dishonours his gracious God and heavenly Father, that it makes him obnoxious to eternal misery, both of body and soul: I say, he who considers this, as all should, would certainly be afraid to commit such impieties. Now of such considerations, you have given us many in your book, and those grounded on the clear light of nature, or on evident reason, or revelation; and it is my prayer and hope that many may read, and to their great benefit remember, and practise them. I am well pleased with your discourse against usury; which, as is commonly managed, I take to be one of the crying sins of our ungrateful nation. Give me leave, faithfully and as a friend to add one thing more. In your second page, there is, I believe, a little mistake. For you seem to say, that James, who wrote the canonical epistle, was brother to John the apostle. Now it is certain, that amongst the apostles there were two of that name.

1. James the son of Zebedee, and brother of John.
2. James the son of Alpheus, Matt. x. 2, 3, who

was called James the less, Mark xv. 40, whose mother was Mary, who was sister to the Virgin Mary; and so our blessed Saviour and James the son of Alpheus were sisters' children, cousin-germans. Now that James the son of Zebedee, and brother of John, did not write that canonical epistle, will be certain, if we consider, 1. That James, brother of John, was slain by Herod Agrippa, Acts xii. 2, which was Anno Christi 44* or 45. And 2ndly, If it be considered, that the epistle of James was not written till the year of Christ 63: for so Baronius, Simpson, and the best chronologers assure us. They say, that epistle of James was not writ till almost twenty years after James the brother of John was slain by Herod: and therefore it is certain, he neither did nor could write it. I beg your pardon for this tedious, and I fear impertinent, scribble. My love and due respects remembered. I shall pray for a blessing upon you and your studies: and your prayers are heartily desired by and for

Your affectionate friend and brother,

THOMAS LINCOLN.

Buckden, March 16, 1681.

For my Reverend Friend, Mr. SAM. SHAW,
at his House at Ashby-de-la-Zouch.

* Jac. Usserius, Annal. pag. 868, Ed. 1658; Baron. Annal. tom. i.

If such a correspondence as this between the bishops of the church of England and the ministers among the Dissenters, had been generally maintained, it might have produced much better effects than the great distance that has been kept up on both sides.—Mr. Shaw was a man of a peaceable disposition. He was frequently employed, and very successful in his endeavours to reconcile differences. He had a public and generous spirit, and was ever ready to encourage any good designs. He was given to hospitality, and was very moderate in his principles. For the space of almost thirty years he spent himself in endeavours to make the world better, though with no great gains to himself. It was his chief aim to live usefully; and he thought that, a considerable reward to itself. He was of a middle stature, and his countenance not very penetrating: like another Melancthon, that could not fill a chair with a big look and portly presence; but his eye was sparkling, and his conversation witty, savoury, affable, and pertinent. He was ready at repartees and innocent jests, with a mixture of poetry, history, and other polite learning. But his greatest excellency was in religious discourse, in praying and preaching. One that knew him well, writes as follows:—

“ I have known him spend part of many days and nights too in religious exercise, when the times were so dangerous that it would hazard an imprisonment to be worshipping God with five or six people like minded with himself. I have sometimes been in his company for a whole night together, when we have been fain to steal to the place in the dark, to stop out the light and stop in the voice, by clothing and fast closing the windows, till the first day-break down a chimney has given us notice to be gone. I bless God for such seasons. If some say it was needless to do so much : I reply, the care of our souls and eternity, which only was minded there, requires more. I say, I bless God for the remembrance of them, and for Mr. Shaw at them, whose melting words in prayer, I can never forget. He had a most excellent faculty in speaking to God with reverence, humility, and a holy awe of his presence, “ filling his mouth with arguments : by his strength he had power with God ; he wept and made supplication ; he found him in Bethel (such were our assemblies,) and there he spake with us.” I have heard him for two or three hours together pour out prayer to God, without tautology or vain repetition, with that vigour and fervour, and those holy words that imported faith and humble bold-

ness, as have dissolved the whole company into tears," &c.—In short, a mixture of so much learning and humility, wit and judgment, piety and pleasantness, are rarely found together, as met in him. He died Jan. 22, 1696, in the fifty-ninth year of his age. His funeral sermon was preached by Mr. William Crosse, his brother-in-law, from Luke xxiii. 28.

PREFACE.

AMONGST the many stupendous spectacles that are wont to surprize and amuse inquisitive minds, there seems to be nothing in the world of a sadder and more astonishing description, than the small progress and propagation of the Christian religion. This I call a sad observation, because religion is a matter of the most weighty and necessary importance, without which it is not possible for an immortal soul to be perfected and made happy: I call it astonishing, because the Christian religion hath in itself such advantages of recommending itself to the minds of men, and contains in it such mighty engines to work them into a hearty compliance with it, and to captivate their reason unto itself, as no other religion in the world can with any face pretend to. I do earnestly, and I suppose rationally and scripturally, hope that this *veritas magna*, those sacred oracles will yet more prevail, and that the Founder of this most excellent religion, who was lifted up upon the cross, and is now exalted to his throne, will yet draw more men unto himself: and this, perhaps, is all the millennium that we can warrantably look for. But, in the mean time, it is

too, too evident, that the kingdom of Satan doth more obtain in the world, than the gospel of Christ, either in the letter or power of it. As to the former, if we will receive the probable conjecture of learned inquirers, we shall not find above one-sixth part of the known world yet christianized, or giving so much as an external adoration to the crucified Jesus. As to the latter, I will not be so bold to make any arithmetical conjectures, but judge it more necessary, and more becoming a charitable and christian spirit, to sit down in secret, and weep over that sad but true account given in the gospel, "Few are chosen," Matt. xx. 16; and again, "Few there be that find it," Matt. vii. 14; being grieved, after the example of my compassionate Redeemer, "for the hardness of their hearts," and praying with Joab, in another case, "The Lord make his people an hundred times so many more as they be!" 1 Chron. xxi. 3. It is besides my present purpose to inquire into the immediate causes of the non-propagation of the gospel in the former sense; only it is easy and obvious to guess, that few will enter in by "the way of the tree of life," when the same is guarded with a "flaming sword!" And it were reasonable to hope, that if the minds of Christians were more purged from a selfish bitterness, fierce animosity, and arbitrary sourness, and possessed with a more free, generous, benign, compassionate, condescending, candid, charitable, and Christ-like spirit, which would be indulgent towards such as are, for the pre-

sent, under a less perfect dispensation, as our Saviour's was, Luke ix. 49, 50, 54, 55, would not impose anything harsh or unnecessary upon the sacred and inviolable consciences of men, but would allow and maintain that liberty to men, which is just and natural to them in matters of religion, and no way forfeited by them; then, I say, it might be reasonable to hope, that the innate power and virtue of the gospel would prove most victorious; Judaism, Mahometism, and Paganism, would melt away under its powerful influences, and Satan himself "fall down as lightning" before it, as naturally as the eye-lids of the morning do chase away the blackness of the night, when once they are lifted up upon the earth. But my design is chiefly to examine the true and proper cause of the non-progress of the gospel, as to the power of it, and its inefficaciousness upon the hearts and consciences of those that do profess it. And now, in finding out the cause hereof, I shall content myself to be wise on this side heaven, leaving that daring course of searching the decrees of God, and rifling into the hidden rolls of eternity, to them who can digest the uncomfortable notion of a self-willed, arbitrary, and imperious Deity; which, I doubt, is the most vulgar apprehension of God, men measuring him most grossly and unhappily by a self-standard. And as I dare not soar so high, so neither will I adventure to stoop so low, as to rake into particulars; which are differently assigned, according to the different hu-

mours and interests of them that do assign them; each party in the world being so exceedingly favourable to itself, as to be ready to say with David, "The earth, and all the inhabitants of it, are dissolved; I bear up the pillars of it," Psal. lxxv. 3; ready to think that the very interest of religion in the world is involved in them and their persuasions and dogmas, and that the whole church is undone, if but a hair fall from their heads, if they be in the least injured or abridged; which is a piece of very great fondness, and indeed the more unpardonable, inasmuch as it destroys the design of the gospel, in confining and limiting the Holy One of Israel, and making God as topical, as he was when he dwelt nowhere upon earth but at the temple in Jerusalem.

Waving these extremes therefore, I conceive the true cause in general of the so little prevailing of true religion in the hearts and lives of men, is the false notion that men have of it, placing it there where indeed it is not, nor doth consist. That this must needs be a cause of the not prevailing of the gospel wherever it is found, I suppose every body will grant; and that it is almost every where to be found, will, I doubt, too evidently appear by that description of the true Christian religion, which the most sacred author of it, the Lord Jesus Christ, made to the poor Samaritaness; which I have endeavoured briefly to explain, according to the tenor of the gospel, in this small Treatise; which I first framed for private use, in a season when it was most

important for me to understand the utmost secrets of my own soul, and do the utmost service I was able towards the salvation of those that were under my roof; expecting every day to render up my own or their souls into the arms of our most merciful Redeemer, and to be swallowed up in that eternal life, into which true religion daily springs up, and will, at length, infallibly conduct the christian soul. This work, thus undertaken, and in a great measure then carried on, I have since perfected, and do here present to the perusal of my dear country, having made it public for no private end; but, if it might be, to serve the interest of God's glory in the world; which I do verily reckon that I shall do, if, by his blessing, I may be instrumental to undeceive any soul mistaken in so high an affair and of such importance as religion is, or any way to awaken and quicken any religious soul not sufficiently impressed with the unspeakable glory, nor cheerfully enough springing up into the full fruition of eternal life.

What a certain and undefeatable tendency true religion hath towards the eternal happiness and salvation of men's souls, will, I hope, evidently appear out of the body of this small Treatise; but that is not all (though indeed that were enough to commend it to any rational soul, that is any whit free and ingenuous, and is not so perfectly debauched as to apostatize utterly from right reason;) for it is also the sincerest policy imaginable, and the most

unerring expedient in the world, for the uniting and establishing of a divided and tottering kingdom or commonwealth: to demonstate which was the very design of this Preface. It is well known, (O that it were but as well and effectually believed!) that "godliness is profitable to all things," and that it hath the promises and blessings of the "life that now is, and of that which is to come," 1 Tim. iv. 8; that the right seeking of the kingdom of God and his righteousness, hath no less than all things annexed to it, Matt. vi. 33. How unmeasurable is the body and bulk of that blessedness, to which all the comforts of this life are to be as an appendix to a volume! But men are apt to shuffle off general things; therefore I will descend to instances, and show in a few particulars, what a mighty influence religion in the power of it, would certainly have for the political happiness and flourishing state of a nation. Wherein I doubt not but to make appear, that not religion, as some slanderously report, but indeed the want of it, is the immediate troubler of every nation, and individual society; yea, and soul too: according to that just saying of the holy apostle, "From whence come wars and fightings? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" James iv. 1. Here let me desire one thing of the reader, and that is, to bear in his mind all along, where he finds the word religion, that I have principally a respect to the description given of it in the text, and that I mean thereby,

“a divine principle implanted in the soul, springing up into everlasting life.”

And now I should briefly touch those faults, both in governors towards their subjects, subjects towards their governors, and towards each other, which do destroy the peaceful state, and the sound and happy constitution of a body politic: and indeed I fear it will run me upon some inconvenience, if not confusion, to wave this method. But out of a pure desire to avoid whatever may be interpretable to ill-will, curiosity, presumption, or any other bad disposition, and that it may appear to any ingenuous eye, that I am more desirous to bind up than to rake into sores, I will expressly show how religion would heal the distempers of any nation, without taking any more than an implicit notice of the distempers themselves.

First then, It is undoubtedly true that religion, deeply radicated in the nature of princes and governors, would most effectually qualify them for the most happy way of reigning. Every body knows well enough what an excellent euchrasy,* and lovely constitution the Jewish polity was in, under the influence of holy David, wise Solomon, devout Hezekiah, zealous Josiah, and others of the same spirit; so that I need not spend myself in that inquiry, and so consequently not upon that argument. Now, there are many ways by which it

* A Greek word, implying a good temperature and condition, or state of the body.

is easy to conceive that religion would rectify and well-temper the spirits of princes.

This principle will verily constitute the most noble, heroical, and royal soul, inasmuch as it will not suffer men to find any unhallowed satisfaction in a divine authority, but will be springing up into a God-like nature, as their greatest and most perfect glory. It will certainly correct and limit the over-eager affectation of unwieldy greatness and unbounded dominion, by teaching them that the most honourable victory in the world is self-conquest, and that the propagation of the image and kingdom of God in their own souls is infinitely preferable to the advancement or enlargement of any temporal jurisdiction.

The same holy principle, being the most genuine offspring of divine love and benignity, will also polish their rough and over-severe natures, instruct them in the most sweet and obliging methods of government by assimilating them to the nature of God, who is infinitely abhorrent from all appearance of oppression, and hath most admirably provided that his servants should not be slaves, by making his service perfect freedom.

The pure and impartial nature of God cannot endure superstitious flatterers, or hypocritical professors; and the princes of the earth, that are regenerated into his image, will also estimate men according to God; I mean, according to his example who loves nothing but the communications of him-

self, and according to their participation of his image, which alone is amiable and worthy of advancement. What God rejected in his fire-offerings, religion will teach princes to dislike in the devotions, as they call them, of their courtiers; I mean, not only the leaven of superstitious pride and dogged morosity, but also the honey of mercenary prostrations and fawning adulations.

In a word, this religious principle which makes God its pattern and end springs from him, and is always springing up into him, would sovereignly heal the distempers of men ruled by humour, self-interest, and arbitrariness, and teach them to seek the good of the public before self-gratifications. For so God rules the world; who, however some men slander him, I dare say, hath made nothing the duty of his creature but what is really for its good; neither doth he give his people laws on purpose that he might show his sovereignty in making them, or his justice in punishing the breach of them; much less doth he give them any such statutes, as which himself would as willingly they broke as kept, so he might but exact the penalty.

What I have briefly said concerning political governors, the judicious reader may view over again, and apply to the ecclesiastical. For I do verily reckon that if the hearts of these men were in that right religious temper and holy order which I have been speaking of, it would plentifully contribute towards the happy and blissful state of any

kingdom. I will speak freely, let it light where it will, that principle which springs up into popular applause, secular greatness, worldly pomp and ostentation, flesh-pleasing, or any kind of self-exaltation, which is various, is really contradistinct from that divine principle, that religious nature which springs up into everlasting life. And certainly, notwithstanding all the recriminations and self-justifications which are, on all hands, used to shuffle off the guilt, these governors must lay aside their sullen pride, as well as the people their proud sullenness, before the church of God be healed in its breaches, purged of Antichristianism, or can probably arrive at any sound constitution or perfect stature.

But I suppose religion will not have its full and desirable effect upon a nation, by healing the sickly heads of it, except it be like the holy oil poured upon the sacrificer's head, which ran down also upon the skirts of his garments, Psal. cxxxiii. 2. Therefore,

Secondly, It is indispensably requisite for the thorough healing and right constituting of any political body, that the subjects therein be thus divinely principled. This will not fail to dispose them rightly towards their governors, and towards one another.

1. Towards their governors. There are many evil and perverse dispositions in subjects towards their rulers; all which religion is the most excellent expedient to rectify.

The first and fundamental distemper here seems to be a want of due reverence toward these vicegerents of God upon earth ; which easily grows up into something positive, and becomes a secret wishing of evil to them. This fault, as light as some esteem it, was severely punished in Queen Michal, who despised her lord, king David, in her heart, and her barren womb went down to its sister the grave under the great reproach of living and dying childless. And if an ordinary hatred be so foully interpreted by the holy apostle, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer," 1 John iii. 15 ; surely disloyal and malignant dispositions towards governors must needs have a fouler face ; and we may say, by a parity of reason, "Whosoever hateth his prince is a rebel and a regicide." Now this distemper, as fundamental and epidemical as it is, the spirit of true religion will heal, and I think I may say that only : for I know nothing in the world that hath, nay, I know that nothing in the world hath that sovereignty and dominion over the dispositions and affections of the soul, as this principle thoroughly ingrafted in the soul, doth challenge to itself. This alone can frame the heart of man into that beautiful temper and complexion of love and loyalty, that he will not curse the king, no, not in his secret thoughts ; no, not though he were well assured that there were no winged messenger to tell the matter, Eccles. x. 20.

Another distemper in subjects, respective to

their governors, is impatience of bearing a yoke ; which is an evil so natural to the proud and imperious spirit of man, that I believe it were safe to affirm, that every irreligious subject could be well content to be a prince ; however there may be many who, utterly despairing of such an event, may with the fox in the fable profess they care not for it. From this principle of pride and impatience of subjection, I suspect it is that the millennarians do so scornfully declaim against, and so loudly decry the carnal ordinances of magistracy and ministry : not that they do verily seek the advancement of Christ's kingdom (which indeed every disorderly, tumultuous, proud, impatient soul doth, *ipso facto*, deny and destroy) but of themselves. To whom one might justly apply the censure which Pharaoh injuriously passes upon the children of Israel, with a little alteration, "Ye are proud, therefore ye say, Let us go, and do sacrifice to the Lord," Exod. v. 17. This distemper the power of religion would excellently heal, by mortifying ambitious inclinations, and quieting the impatient turbulences of the fretful and envious soul, by fashioning the heart to a right humble frame and cheerful submission to every ordination of God. You will see in this treatise that a right religious soul, powerfully springing up into everlasting life, hath no list nor leisure to attend to such poor attainments and sorry acquisitions, as the lording it over other men ; being feelingly acquainted with a life far more excellent than

the most princely, and being overpowered with a supreme and sovereign good, which charms all its inordinate ragings, and laying hold upon all its faculties, draws them forth by a pleasing violence, unto a most zealous pursuit of itself. A principle of humility makes men good subjects; and they that are indeed probationers for another world, may very well behave themselves with a noble disdain towards all the glories and preferments of this.

The last distemper that I shall name in subjects towards their governors is discontents about conceited mis-government and mal-administration: which commonly spring from an evil and sinister interpretation of the ruler's actions, and are attended with an evil and tumultuous zeal for relaxation. Now this distemper, as great as it is and destructive to the well-being of a body politic, true religion would heal both root and branch. Were that noble part and branch of the Christian religion, universal charity, rightly seated in the soul, it would not suffer the son of the bond-woman to inherit with it; it would cast out those ireful jealousies, sour suspicions, harsh surmises, and imbittered thoughts which lodge in unhallowed minds, and display itself in a most amicable sweetness and gentleness of disposition, in fair glosses upon doubtful actions, friendly censures or none at all, kind extenuations of greater faults and covering of lesser; for this is the proper genius of this divine principle, to be very unbelieving of evil or easily entertaining

of good reports, gladly interpreting all things to a good meaning that will possibly admit of such a construction; or if you will, in the apostle's phrase, "Charity is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil," 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

And as charity doth cut up this root of discontents, so will faith allay and destroy these discontents themselves, which are about mis-government and ill-administration. This noble principle administers ease and satisfaction to the soul, if she happen to be provoked: for it will not suffer her long to stand gazing upon second causes, but carries her up in a seasonable contemplation to the supreme cause, without whom no disorder could ever befall the world; and there commands her to repose herself, in the bosom of infinite wisdom and grace, waiting for a comfortable issue. He may well be vexed indeed, that has so much reason as to observe the many monstrous disorders which are in the world, and not so much faith as to eye the inscrutable providence of a benign and all-wise God, who permitteth the same with respect to the most beautiful end and blessed order imaginable. Though faith abhors the blasphemy of laying blame upon God, yet it so fixes the soul upon him, and causes her so to eye his hand and end in all mal-administrations of men, that she hath no leisure to fall out with men, or quarrel with instruments.

These discontents, I said, were frequently attended with an evil and seditious zeal for relaxa-

tion, discovering itself in secret treacherous conspiracies, and many times in boisterous and daring attempts. These are at the first sight so directly contrary to the character given of religious men, namely, "the quiet of the land," Psal. xxxv. 20, and the genius of religion, which is wholly made up of "love, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance, mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, forbearance, forgiveness, charity, thankfulness, wisdom," Gal. v. 22, 23. Col. iii. 12—16; that it is easy to conceive that religion, in the power of it, would certainly heal this evil disease also. There are many pretenders to religion, whose complaint is still concerning oppression and persecution, their cry is all for liberty and deliverance; but to make it the more passable and plausible, they style it the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. This pretence is so fair, but withal so deceitful, that I count it worth my time to speak a little more liberally to it. And here I do from the very bottom of my soul protest, that I account the advancement of the glory of God and the kingdom of Christ, to be the most desirable thing in the world; and that it is highly becoming the greatest spirits upon earth to employ their very utmost zeal and diligence to assist the accomplishment thereof: yea, so utterly do I abhor irreligion and atheism, that, as the apostle speaks, Phil. i. 18, in somewhat a like case, I do verily rejoice that Christ is professed, though it be but pretended, and

that truth is owned, though it be not owned in truth. I will further add, that the oppressing and obstructing of the external progress and propagation of the gospel is hated of Christ, and to be lamented of all true Christians. Yea, I will further allow men a due sensibleness of their personal oppressions and injuries, and a natural warrantable desire to be redeemed from them. And now having thus purged myself, I entreat the christian reader patiently and without prejudice to suffer me to speak somewhat closely to this matter: yea, I do verily assure myself that I shall be accepted, or at least indulged by all free and ingenuous spirits, who are rightly acquainted with the genius of the christian religion, and do prefer truth before interest.

And, first, for the complaint that is mostly concerning oppression and persecution; certainly religion, if it did rightly prevail in our hearts, would very much heal this distemper, if not by a perfect silencing of these complaints, yet surely by putting them into another tune. I reckon that religion quite silences these complaints, when it engages the soul so entirely in serving the end of God in afflictions, and in a right improvement of them for religious purposes, that she cannot spend herself in fruitless murmurings and unchristian indignation. As fire seizeth upon every thing that is combustibile, and makes it fuel for itself, and a predominant humour in the body converts into its own substance whatever is convertible, and makes it

nourishment to itself; so doubtless this spirit of burning, this divine principle, if it were rightly predominant in the soul, would nourish itself by all things that lie in its way, though they seem ever so heterogeneous and hard to be digested; and rather than want meat it would, with Samson, fetch it out of the very eater himself. But if religion should not utterly silence these complainings, by rendering the soul thus forgetful of the body, and regardless of its smart, in comparison of the happy advantage that may be made of it; yet, methinks, it should draw the main stream of these tears into another channel, and put these complaints into another tune. It is very natural to the religious soul to make God all things unto itself, to lay to heart the interest of truth and holiness more than any particular interest of its own; and to bewail the disservice done to God more than any self-incommodation. Must not he needs be a good subject to his prince; who can more heartily mourn that God's laws are not kept, than that he himself is kept under? that can be more grieved that men are cruel, than that they kill him? that can be more troubled because there are oppressions in the world, than because he himself is oppressed? such subjects religion alone can make.

As for the cry that is made for liberty and deliverance, I confess I do not easily apprehend what is more, or more naturally desirable than true liberty: yea, I believe there are many devout and

religious souls that, from a right noble and generous principle, and out of a sincere respect to the Author and end of their creation, are almost intemperately studious of it, do prefer it above all preferments, or anything that may be properly called sensual, and would purchase it with anything that they can possibly part with. But yet that I may a little moderate, if not quite stifle this cry, I must freely profess that I do apprehend too much of selfishness generally in it; because this liberty is commonly abstracted from the proper end of it, and desired merely as a naturally convenient good, and not under a right religious conversation. Self-love is the very heart and centre of the animal life; and doubtless this natural principle is as truly covetous of self-preservation, and freedom from all inconveniences, grievances, and confinements, as any religious principle can be. And therefore I may well allude to our Saviour's words, and say, "If you love and desire deliverance," only under the notion of a natural good, "what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans the same?" Matt. v. 47. But were this divine principle rightly exercising its sovereignty in the soul, it would value all things, and all estates and conditions, only as they have a tendency to the advancement and nourishment of itself. With what an ordinary, not to say disdainful eye, would the religious soul look upon the fairest self-accommodations in the world; and be ready to say within itself, What is a mere abstract

deliverance from afflictions worth? wherein is a naked freedom from afflictions to be accounted of? will this make me a blessed man? was not profane and impudent Ham delivered from the deluge of water, as well as his brethren? were not the filthy, shameless daughters of Lot delivered from the deluge of fire, as well as their father? And yet we are so far from rising up and calling these people blessed, that the heart of every chaste and modest Christian is ready to rise against the very mention of their names, when he remembers how both the one and the other, though in a different sense, discovered their father's nakedness. If we did really value ourselves by our souls, and our souls themselves by what they possess of the image of God, if we did rightly prefer the advancement of the divine life before the gratification of the animal, it is easy to conceive how we should prefer patience before prosperity, faith in God before the favour of men, spiritual purity before temporal pleasures or preferments, humility before honour, the denial of ourselves before the approbation of others, the advancement of God's image before the advancement of our own names, an opportunity of exercising gracious dispositions before the exercising of any temporal power or secular authority; and in a word, the displaying of the beauty, glory, and perfections of God, before health, wealth, liberty, livelihood, and life itself. We should certainly be more indifferently affected towards any condition, whether pros-

perity or adversity, and not be so fond of the one, nor weary of the other, if we did verily value them only by the tendency that they had to further religion, and advance the life of Christ in our souls. This would certainly make men more sincerely studious to read God's end in afflicting them, and less longing to see the end of their afflictions.

And as for treacheries, plottings, invasions, usurpations, rebellions, and that tumultuous zeal for relaxation, which this impatience of oppression, and fondness of deliverance do so often grow up into, I dare say there is nothing like religion, in the power of it, for the effectual healing of them. The true spirit of religion is not so weary of oppression, though it be by sinful men, as it is abhorrent from deliverance, if it be by sinful means. May I not be allowed to allude to the Apostle, and say, whereas there is amongst you this zeal, contention, and faction, "Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" 1 Cor. iii. 3. Is not this the same which a mere natural man would do, strive and struggle, by right and by wrong, to redeem himself from whatsoever is grievous and galling to the interest of the flesh? Might it not be reasonably supposed, that if religion did but display itself aright in the powerful actings of faith, hope, and humility, it would quench this scalding zeal, and calm these tempestuous motions of the soul, and make men rather content to be delivered up to the adversary, though the flesh should by him be destroyed, so the

spirit might be saved, and the divine life advanced in the way of the Lord. O how dear and precious are the possession and practice of faith, patience, humility, and self-denial to a pious soul, in comparison of all the joys and toys, treasures, pleasures, ease and honour of the world, the safety and liberty of the flesh! How much more then, when these must be accomplished by wicked means, and purchased at the rate of God's displeasure? And because the kingdom of Christ is so often alleged to defend and patronize these strange fervours and frenzies, let me here briefly record to all that shall read these lines, the way and method of Christ himself in propagating his own kingdom: It will not be denied but that Christ was infinitely studious to promote his own kingdom in the best and most proper sense: but I no where read that he ever attempted it by force or fraud, by violent opposition or crafty insinuation. Nay, he reckoned that his kingdom was truly promoted, when these tumultuous, impatient, imperious, proud lusts of men were mortified. Nothing had been more easy with him, considering his miraculous power, infallible wisdom, and the mighty interest and party which he could by these have made for himself in the world, than to have raised his own kingdom upon the ruins of the Roman, and to have quite shuffled Cæsar out of the world: but indeed nothing more impossible, considering the perfect innocency and infinite sacredness of his temper, nor anything more

contradiction, considering the proper notion of his kingdom; which he professes not to be secular, and so not to be maintained by fighting: but if you would know in what sense he was a King, he himself seems to intimate it in his answer to Pilate, "Thou sayest that I am a king; to this end was I born, that I should bear witness unto the truth," John xviii. 37. So then it seems wherever there are truth and holiness predominant, there is Christ really enthroned, and actually triumphant. Where religion doth vitally inform, animate, and actuate men's souls, it doth make them rightly to understand that the kingdom of Christ is not the thriving of parties, the strengthening of factions, the advancement of any particular interest, though it seem to be of ever so evangelical a complexion; no, nor yet the proselyting of the world to the profession of Christianity, or of the Christian world to the purer and more reformed profession of it, though these latter would be a great external honour to the person of Christ: but that it is most properly and happily propagated in the spirits of men; and that wherever there are faith, patience, humility, self-denial, contempt of this world, and pregnant hopes of a better, pure obedience to God, and sincere benignity to men, here and there is the kingdom of God, Christ regnant, and the gospel in the power and triumph of it. And may not these things be, and be most conspicuously, in a persecuted condition of the church? That certainly was a high

instance of the mighty power of the divine life in our blessed Saviour, which the apostle Peter records of him, who “when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously,” 1 Pet. ii. 23. The same divine principle dwelling plentifully in our soul, would conduct us to the same behaviour, according to the precept given by the same Apostle, “Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing,” &c. 1 Pet. iii. 9. How vainly do men dream that they serve the interest and advance the kingdom of Christ by fierce and raging endeavours to cast off every yoke that galls them, and kicking against every thorn that pricks them, when indeed they serve the interest of the flesh, and do, under a fine cloak, gratify the mere animal life, and sacrifice to self-love, which is as covetous of freedom from all retrenchments and confinements as religion itself can be. It is said indeed that when the churches had rest they were “edified and multiplied,” Acts ix. 31; but when they suffer “according to the will of God,” they are then glorified: for “the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them,” 1 Pet. iv. 14, as the apostle Paul professes of himself in that most noble and heroical passage of his to the Corinthians; “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me,” 2 Cor. xii. 9.

Secondly, Religion will not fail rightly to dis-

pose the hearts of subjects towards one another; and that whether they be of the same way and judgment with themselves, or different. I dare not assert that it would make them all of the same way and mind; neither do I believe it would: yet I am confident it would do more towards this catholic union, than all the laws and severities in the world can. Mutual forbearance and forgiveness, christian kindness and discreet condescension, are the most warrantable and most effectual method for introducing uniformity, and unanimity too, which is much better, into the church of Christ. But, however, religion would certainly give a right disposition, and teach men a right behaviour in reference to each other, whether Friends or Dissenters.

This principle would teach men to love their friends and accomplices only in the Lord, as his members, not as their own partizans. Are not they strangely devoted to interest that will vindicate anything in a partizan, which they will declaim against in a Dissenter? And yet how is the sacred name of christian friendship reproached every where by reason of this partiality! How much better did true religion instruct the great Apostle, "to know no man after the flesh," 2 Cor. v. 16, no, not Christ himself?

The same principle would not fail to cure the distempers of men relative to those that are of a different way and judgment from themselves; whether of Protestants towards Protestants, or Protest-

ants and Papists towards one another. It would heal the distempered affections and behaviours of Protestants towards Protestants. Were men thoroughly baptized into the spirit of love and wisdom, which are so lively portrayed by the apostles St. Paul and St. James, that one might be well enamoured of the very description: how certainly would all oppressions, law-suits, disputations about unprofitable and indeterminable points, either be suppressed or sanctified, either not be, or not be vexatious? Not to speak of the oppressions done by overreaching, stealing, lying, false witness-bearing, slanderous detractions, envious suggestions, and malignant dissemination of doubtful suspicions, by which commonly poor men oppress the rich; all which true religion abhors. There is a great oppression that goes uncontrouled in the world, which is, by the cruel engrossings and covetous insatiable tradings of richer men. What these are intentionally I will not say, but that they are really and eventually as great oppressions as those inhuman depopulations, and squeezing exactions, which are so much inveighed against, I doubt not. But, be they what they will, or be they excused how they will, I am confident that this divine principle that powerfully springs up into everlasting life, would mightily relieve the world in this respect; in that it would moderate men's desires of corruptible riches, forbid them to seek the things of this world any more or any otherwise than in consistency with, and sub-

serviency to, their primary and most diligent seeking of the kingdom of God; it would make men seek the wealth of others even as their own, and make private advantages stoop to the public good. *I do verily believe, that if there were none but good men in England, there would be no poor men there.* Civil laws may provide for the maintenance of the poor; but the law of divine love, a principle of religion, if it were universally obeyed, would make men so nobly regardless of earthly accommodations, that there would soon be room enough for all men to thrive into a sufficient stature; and then, being so grown, they would covet no more.

In law-suits, if there were any, men would seek the advancement of truth, and not of their own cause and interest distinct from it.

And O how excellently would it still the noise of axes and hammers about the temple of God! It would take men off from vain speculations and much eagerness about unnecessary opinions, by employing them in more substantial and important studies. The very being of religion in the soul would indeed decide a world of controversies, which the schools have long laboured in vain to determine. For I reckon that these scholastic wars fitly called polemics, like those civil dissensions spoken of by the apostle James, chap. iv. 1, do, for the most part, spring from men's lusts that war in their members, such as pride, curiosity, wantonness of wit, disobedience, and unsubduedness of under-

standing, and the like. I have observed with great grief, how the spirits of many men, I had almost said sects of men, run out wholly into disputes about ceremonies, *pro* and *con*, about church government, about what is orthodox and what is heterodox, about the true and the false church, (which commonly they judge by something external, and indeed separable from the essence of a true church;) and hereabout are their zeal, their conference, and their very prayers themselves mostly bestowed. Who can doubt but that religion, in the power of it, would find men something else to do? yea, and if it could not perfectly determine these niceties, yet it would much heal our dissensions about them, and bring tears to quench the strange and unnatural heats that are amongst us, and cause such dreadful inflammations in our breasts.

But it may seem that there is such a fatal enmity and irreconcilable feud betwixt Papists and Protestants, that nothing, no, not religion itself, can heal it. And truly if we suppose that it is religion that engages both parties in this enmity, I think it will prove incurable; but God forbid that this pure offspring of heaven should be so blasphemed! It is not religion, but indeed the want of it, that begets this implacable animosity, whatever is pretended. Cruel religion, bloody religion, selfish religion, envious and revengeful religion! Who can choose but cry out of the blasphemy of this contradiction at the very first hearing? Nay, I dare

affirm it without hesitation, that the more religious any Protestant or Papist is, the more abhorrent he is from brutish savageness, wicked revenge, and devilish hatred. The church of Rome judges the reformed heretics are not fit to live; and why? not because they live not well, but because they cannot think and believe as they do. And is this the genuine product of true religion? nothing less. For a desire of ruling over men's consciences, and of subjecting the faith of others to themselves, is certainly compatible to a mere natural man, nay, to the devil himself, who is as lordly, cruel, and imperious as any other. The reformed churches, on the other hand are, I doubt, generally more offended at the Papists for their persecutions of them, than for their real persecuting and crucifying Christ afresh by their sins; and so, consequently, do rather write and fight against them, than either pity or pray for them. I hope there are as many well-spirited Christians in England, at least proportionably, as in any church upon earth; and yet I fear there are far more that could wish the Papists out of this world, than that earnestly desire that they might be fitted for, and so counted worthy of a better. And doth this spring from a religious principle, think ye, or a selfish? Doth it not agree well to the animal life, and natural self, to be tender of its own interests and concernments, to wish well to its own safety, to defend itself from violence? May I not allude to our Saviour's words and say,

“If ye hate them that hate you, how can that be accounted religious? Do not even the publicans the same?” Matt. v. 46. I doubt we know not sufficiently what spirit we should be of. The power of religion, rightly prevailing in the soul, would mould us into another kind of temper; it would teach us as well to love, and pity, and pray for Papists, as to hate Popery. I know the prophecy indeed, that the beast and the false prophet shall be cast alive into the lake burning with brimstone, and the remnant shall be slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, Rev. xix. 20, but, inasmuch as that sword is said to proceed “out of his mouth,” Rev. xix. 21; I would gladly interpret it of “the word of God,” Eph. vi. 17, which kills men unto salvation. However, let the interpretation of that text, and others of the like importance, be what it will, I reckon it very unsafe to turn all the prophecies and threatenings of God into prayers, lest perhaps we should be found to contribute to the damning of men’s souls. Yea, when all is said concerning the sovereign decrees of God, and his essential and inflexible punitive justice, and all those texts that seem to speak of God’s revenging himself with delight, are interpreted to the utmost harshness of meaning that the cruel wit of man can invent; yet it remains a sealed, and to me a sweet truth, “I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God,” Ezek. xviii. 32; and again, “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no

pleasure in the death of the wicked," Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Wherefore, to wave all those dreadful glosses (that do rather describe the bitter and revengeful temper of man that makes them, than interpret the pure and perfect nature of God upon whom they are made,) let us attend to that beautiful character that is every where given of religion, which is our highest concern, in the person of Moses, of Paul, and of Christ Jesus himself, the author and exemplar of it; who by his incarnation, life, and death, abundantly demonstrated the infinite benignity and compassionate ardors of his soul towards us, when we were worse than Papists, as being out of a possibility of salvation without him; and "let that mind be in us, which was in him also," Phil. ii. 5. Though it be not directly our Saviour's meaning in my text, yet I believe it is reductively, that this pure and divine principle, religion, springs up into everlasting life, not only our own, but other men's also. But, however religion is described, sure I am it is most unnatural to the religious soul that is regenerated into the pure spirit of piety, pity, and universal charity, to be of a cruel, fierce, revengeful, condemning disposition. And therefore whatever are the ranting and wrathful strains of some men's devotions, I beseech the reader to endeavour with me, that charity towards men's souls may go along in conjunction with zeal and piety towards God, when we present ourselves before the throne of his grace; and so, I am confident, it will if we pray

sincerely to this purpose, namely, "That God would cause the wickedness of the wicked to come to an end, that he would consume the Antichrist, but convert the Papist, and make the wonderers after the beast to become followers of the Lamb!" I doubt there are many that think they can never be too liberal in wishing ill of the Papists, nay, they count it a notable argument of a good Protestant, I had almost said an evidence of grace, to be very furious and vehement against them. Alas! how miserably do we bewray ourselves in so doing, to be nothing less than what we pretend to by doing it. For are not we ourselves herein antichristian, whilst we complain of their cruelties, our own souls, in the very act, boiling over with revengeful and scalding affections? If we do indeed abhor their cruelty, because it is contrary to the holy precepts of the gospel, and the true kingdom of Christ, we ought to be as jealous at the same time lest anything like unto it should be found in ourselves; otherwise are we not carnal? For mere nature, as I have often said, will abhor anything that is contrary to itself, and will not willingly suffer its delicate interest to be touched. The apostle tells us, that no man speaking by the "Spirit of Christ, calleth Christ accursed," 1 Cor. xii. 3; but I doubt it is common to curse Antichrist, and yet by a spirit that is antichristian, I mean carnal, selfish, cruel, and uncharitable. For there is a spiritual Antichrist, or, if you will, in the Apostle's phrase, a "spirit of Anti-

christ," 1 John iv. 3, as well as a political Antichrist; and I doubt the former prevails most in the world, though it be the least discerned and banned. Men do by Antichrist as they do by the devil, defy him in words, but entertain him in their hearts, run away from the appearance of him, and, in the mean time, can be well content to be all that in the very deed which the devil and Antichrist is. All this evidently appears to be for want of the true power and spirit of religion which I commend for so great a healer, even the τὸ πανακὲς of our distempers.

Perhaps no papist will find in his heart to read this epistle written by a heretic; yet possibly too, some one or other may: therefore I will adventure briefly to prescribe this same medicinal divinity to them also; though perhaps I might be excused upon other accounts, all that I have hitherto said to distempered Protestants being rightly enough, *mutatis mutandis*, applicable to them. But moreover, whereas they value their church, and the truth and rightness of it, by its universality and prosperity; the power of religion would make men to value themselves and their adherents, only by the divine impressions of piety and purity, and to account such only worthy of the glorious title of apostolical, and children of God, who are sincere followers of the apostles wherein they were followers of Christ, namely, in true holiness and righteousness. Are they industrious and zealous for the proselyting of the world, and spreading of their in-

terest far and near? And are not all wicked men, yea, and the devil himself so too? The fairest and most flourishing state of a church is nothing to God, and so consequently not to a pious soul, in comparison of those excellent divine beauties wherewith religion adorneth the world. But whereas the greatest complaint, and the most dreadful charge which the Protestants bring against the Papists, is their inhumanity and most unchristian cruelty, exercised against all whom they can but make shift to esteem heretics; and they, on the other hand, allege, that the interest of religion, and the catholic faith doth require it, and that they do not so properly murder men, as sacrifice them to the honour of God: it will be proper to spend a little time, at least, to clear religion of this blame; that as wisdom is at all times justified of, and in her children, so she may be sometimes justified by them, especially when the aspersions are so monstrously foul. And indeed she has sufficiently instructed us how to justify her from all such imputations; having so fairly pourtrayed herself by the pen of the apostle James, both negatively and affirmatively. She is void of "strife, envyings, bitterness, and every evil work;" but she is "pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy," James iii. 14—17. This is the proper description of heavenly wisdom, or pure religion: and O that all Christians would estimate themselves to be wise according to

their consonancy and conformity thereunto ! then I would easily believe, that none would be papists in practice, whatever they might be in opinion. What, sirs, is the God of the Christians become like a devil, that he should delight in cruelty, and drink the blood of men ? Is the butchering of reasonable creatures that reasonable service which he requires ? Rom. xii. 1. Is the living sacrifice of your own bodies turned into the dead sacrifice of other men's ? It was wont to be said, " What communion hath Christ with Belial ? " 2 Cor. vi. 15. And is the Prince of peace now become very Satan, the author of enmity, malignity, confusion, and every evil work ? Did he shed his blood for his enemies, to teach us that goodly lesson of shedding the blood of ours ? Did he come " to seek and to save that which was lost," Luke xix. 10, to set us an example that we might seek to destroy, and that only to repair our own losses ? Be it so ; that the Protestant churches have apostatized from you : this, I hope, is not a greater crime than the apostacy of mankind from God, which yet he expiated, not with the blood of the apostates, but with his own. Religion was formerly a principle springing up into eternal life. How is the world changed, that it should now be a principle springing up into massacres, and temporal death ? or is religion now become a principle springing up into secular power, worldly dominion, temporal greatness, and all manner of fleshly accommodations ? This was of old the

description of sensuality, and a heathen genius, "for after all these things do the Gentiles seek," Matt. vi. 32. Are there so many mighty engines in the gospel to engage the hearts of men to believe, profess, and obey it, and must they all now give place to fire and sword? Are these the only gospel methods of winning men to the catholic faith? What! are we wiser for Christ, or more zealous than he himself was? Did he forbid fire from heaven, and will you fetch it even from hell to consume Dissenters? Did he sheath his sword that was drawn in his own defence, and set a dreadful seal upon it too, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword;" and will you adventure to draw it in a way of revenge and persecution, and count it meritorious too, as if you should therefore never perish because you take it? Is it not written in your Bibles, as well as ours, that "no murderer shall enter into the kingdom of God?" And do you think by murders to propagate this kingdom upon earth, and have a more abundant entrance into it yourselves hereafter? Can hell dwell with heaven? Shall bloody cruelty ever come to lodge in the bosom, or lie down in the sacred arms of eternal love? Be not deceived, sirs, with a false heaven; but take this for an indubitable and self-evidencing aphorism of truth, No soul of man hath any more of heaven, no, nor ever shall have, than he hath of God, and of his pure, placable, patient, benign, and gracious nature. And this is that everlasting life which a

religious principle is always springing up into ; so that it hereby appears plainly, that religion, in the power of it, would heal these feverish distempers also, and so restore a most excellent constitution, both personal and political.

It may possibly seem that I have toiled too much in these discoveries ; and perhaps my pains may prove ungrateful to many : but may it please Almighty God that they may prove a vindication of religion, restorative of the sickly and lapsed ecclesiastical or political state, yea, or medicinal and profitable to any single soul of man, I shall venture to estimate it against an age of pains. And if it should prove that by all this toil I have caught nothing, as the weary disciples complained of old, nevertheless being well assured that I have a word of God for my encouragement, I will let down the net once again, and so finish these epistolary pains with an earnest hortatory address to all that shall peruse them.

Let nothing satisfy your souls, Christians, let nothing administer rest or settlement to your hearts, that is common to the natural man, or compatible to the mere animal life. There are a great many high strains of zeal and seeming devotion, by which many men judge themselves to be some great ones, and concerning which they are ready to say, These things are the great power of God ; which, if they be well looked into, will be found to grow upon no better root than natural self, and to spring from no

higher principle than this animal life. It is impossible for me to give an exact catalogue of all these; many of them I have occasionally recorded in the latter end of the ensuing treatise; to which yet many more might be added, if I had a fair opportunity. But at present let me in general commend to you this description given by our Saviour of true religion, as the rule whereby I do earnestly intreat you faithfully to examine yourselves, your actions, affections, zeal, confidence, professions, performances. Let me speak freely; all pomp of worship, all speculative knowledge, though ever so orthodox, is as agreeable to the animal life as the divine: and all external models of devotion, humble confessions, devout hymns, pathetical prayers, raptures of joy, much zeal to reform indecencies in worship or superstitions, a fierce raging against the political Antichrist, do as well suit a natural man as a spiritual, and may be as fairly acted over apparently, by a mere selfish carnal principle, as by that which is truly divine. When Diogenes trampled upon Plato's stately bed, saying *calco Platonis fastum*, it was answered him very sharply, *sed majore fastu*, he was prouder in treading upon it, than Plato was in lying upon it. I doubt it may be applied too truly to a great deal of that cynical and scornful zeal, that is in the world at this day; men declaim against the pride, and pomp, and grandeur of anti-christian prelates, with a pride no whit inferior to theirs whom they thus decry. However it is plain,

that those things which are imitable by a sensual heart, and indeed performable by the mere magic of an exalted fancy, are not to be rested in by a sincere Christian. Read over therefore, I beseech you, the fruits of the Spirit recorded by the apostle Paul and the apostle Peter, Gal. v. 22, &c. 2 Pet. i. 5, 6; and estimate yourselves by them; these things are utterly incompatible to the mere animal man; all the natural men and devils in the world cannot be humble, meek, self-denying, patient, charitable, lovers of God more than of themselves, or of their enemies as themselves. Would you judge rightly of the goodness of any opinion? then value it by the tendency that is in it to advance the life of God: particularly thus judge of the millenarian opinion, which begins to be so much hugged in the world: concerning which I will only say thus much at present, that, in the common notion of it, as it promises a state of much ease, liberty, power, prosperity, and freedom from all persecutions and oppressions, it is as grateful to the fleshly palate, and will be as gladly embraced by the mere animal man, as by the greatest saint upon earth. And therefore, supposing it to be true, yet I cannot but wonder how it comes to administer so much satisfaction, and afford such a marvellous relish to minds divinely principled, as many seem to taste in it. By this same tendency to advance the divine life in your souls, judge also of all your enjoyments, riches, honours, liberties, friends, health, children,

&c. and value them, if it be possible, only under this consideration. But to hasten to an end, I will endeavour to enforce this general exhortation by two or three weighty considerations. First, it is utterly impossible that any speculation, opinion, profession, enjoyment, ornament, performance, or any other thing, but the transformation of the mind into the very image and nature of God, should ever be able to perfect our souls, or commend us unto God. They cannot perfect our souls, as being most of them exterior, and all of them inferior to it. They cannot commend a man to God, who loves us, and whom we so far know and love, as we partake of his nature, and resemble him: this is the love of God, this is the worship of God, and this is really the soul's acquaintance with him, and nothing but this. Secondly, the advancement of the divine life is that which God mainly designs in the world. I need instance but in two things: 1. The sending of his own Son into the world for this very end and purpose, "that he might take away our sins," says the Apostle John; and again, "that he might destroy the works of the devil;" and again, says the Apostle Paul, "That he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." 2. It appears that this is the grand design of God in the world, inasmuch as he doth not deliver his faithful servants out of their afflictions and tribulations; which he would not fail to do, did he not intend them a greater good thereby,

and design to lead them on and raise them up to a higher life. Now, what can more ennoble these souls of ours, than to live upon the same design with God himself?

And now, reader, I commend thee to the blessing of God, in the perusal of this small tract, which I have composed, and now exposed under a sense of that common obligation that lies upon every person to be active in his sphere for the interest of the name and honour of God, and to render his life as useful as he may: more particularly, under a sense of my own deficiency in several accomplishments, whereby others are better fitted to serve their generation: and especially, under a sense of the peculiar engagement that lieth upon me, to dedicate my life entirely to his service, from whom I have so lately, and that so signally, received the same afresh: in imitation of whom, I hope thou wilt be indulgent towards my infirmities: to whom I heartily commend thee, and to the precious influences of his eternal Spirit, and rest,

Thy servant,

In his work and for his sake,

SAMUEL SHAW.

IMMANUEL.

CHAP. I.

The occasion of the words of the text—The principal contents of it—The origin of true religion—All souls the offspring of God, and a more especial portraiture of him; but pious souls yet more especially—God the author of religion from without, in several respects; God the author of it from within, enlightening the faculty—Religion something of God in the soul—A discovery of religious men by the affinity they have to God—God alone to be acknowledged in all holy accomplishments—The origin of sin from hence discovered.

JOHN IV. 14.

“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.”

THIS chapter contains an excellent, profitable familiar discourse of the blessed Saviour of the world, into whose lips grace was poured, and he ceased not to pour it out again. That which is said of the wise, is fully verified of wisdom itself, His lips dispersed knowledge. A poor woman of Samaria comes to draw water, and our Saviour takes occa-

sion from the water to instruct her in the great and excellent doctrines of the kingdom of heaven. O the admirable zeal for God, and compassion for souls, which dwelt in that divine breast! and O the wonderful, unsearchable counsels of an all-wise God! He ordains Saul's seeking of asses to be the means of his finding a kingdom upon earth; and this poor woman's seeking of water, to be an occasion of her finding the way to the kingdom of heaven. She comes to the well of Jacob, and, behold, she meets with the God of Jacob there. The occasion, passages, and issue of this discourse, would each afford many good and profitable observations: but I think none more than this verse that I have pitched upon; in which the mystery of gospel-grace is rarely unfolded, and true christian religion is excellently described. For so I understand our Saviour, not as speaking of faith, or knowledge, or any other particular grace, but of grace in general, of the Holy Spirit of God; that is, the gifts and graces of it, of true godliness; or, if you will, of christian religion; for that word I shall choose to retain throughout my discourse, as being most intelligible and comprehensive.

In which words we find the true christian religion unfolded in the origin, nature, properties, consequences, and end of it. The origin of it is found in those words, "I shall give him;" the nature of it is described by "a well of water;" the properties of it will be found in the phrase of

“springing up;” the consequence of it, that the man that is endowed with it “shall never thirst;” the end or perfection of it is “everlasting life.” Of all these, by God’s assistance, in this order.

First, I begin at the origin of it, as it seems meet I should; for indeed it is first found in the words, “The water that I shall give him.” And here the proposition that I shall go upon must be, “That the true Christian religion is of divine origin.” All souls are indeed the offspring of God. Those noble faculties of understanding, and a will free from constraint, do more resemble the nature of God than all the world besides. There is more of the glory, beauty, and brightness of God in a soul, than there is in the sun itself. The Apostle allows it as a proper speech spoken in common of all men, “for we are also his offspring.” God hath transferred more lively prints of himself, and his divine essence, upon a rational soul, than he hath upon the whole creation: so that the soul of man, even as to its constitution, doth declare and discover more of the nature of God, than all the other things that he hath made, whereof the Apostle speaks. He that rightly converseth with his own soul, will get more acquaintance with God, than they that gaze continually upon the material heavens, or traverse the dark and utmost corners of the earth, or “go down unto the sea in ships;” the serious consideration of the little world will teach more of him than the great one could do; so that I hesitate not

to take the Apostle's words concerning the word of God, and apply them to the nature of God—"Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven," to bring a discovery of God from thence? or, "who shall descend into the deep," to fetch it up from thence? The nature and essence of God is nigh thee, even in thine own soul, excellently displayed in the constitution and frame, powers and faculties thereof: God hath not made any creatures so capable of receiving and reflecting his image and glory, as angels and men: which hath made me often to say, "That the vilest soul of man is much more beautiful and honourable than the most excellent body, than the very body of the sun at noon-day." And, by the way, this may render sin odious and loathsome; because it hath defiled the fairest piece of God's workmanship in the world, and hath blurred the clearest copy which he had drawn of himself in the whole creation.

But though all rational souls be the children of God, yet all of them do not imitate their father; though their constitution do express much of the essence of God, yet their disposition doth express the image of the devil. But pious souls, who are followers of God, are indeed his dear children. Holy souls, who are endowed with a divine and God-like disposition, and do work the works of God, these are most truly and properly his offspring. And in this respect God's children are his "workmanship created unto good works." Religion is of

a divine origin: God is the author and father of it, both from without and from within.

1. God is the author of it from without. When man had fallen from God by sin, and so had lost his way, and was become both unwilling and unable to return, God was pleased to set up that glorious light, his own Son, "the Sun of righteousness," in the world, that he might guide our feet into the way of peace, who is therefore called, "A light to lighten the Gentiles," and compared to a candle set upon a candlestick. God of his infinite free grace, and over-flowing goodness, provided a Mediator, in and by whom these apostate souls might be reconciled, and re-united to himself; and "to as many as receive him, to them he giveth power to become the sons of God."

Yet further, it pleased God in his infinite wisdom and mercy, to chalk out the way of life and peace in the holy scriptures, and therein to unlock the secrets of salvation to succeeding generations. Herein he hath plainly laid down the terms of the covenant of peace which was made in the Mediator, and given precepts and promises for the direction and encouragement of as many as will inquire into the same. These are the sacred oracles which give clear and certain answers to all that do consult them about their future state. Christ Jesus opened the way into the holiest of all, and the scriptures come after and point it out unto us: he purchased life and immortality, and these bring it to light.

And yet further, that these might not be mistaken or perverted to men's destruction, which were ordained for their salvation, which sometimes doth come to pass, God hath been pleased to commit these records into the hands of his church, and therein to his ministers, whom he hath appointed, called, qualified, instructed, for the opening, explaining, interpreting, and applying of them: so that they are called "scribes instructed unto the kingdom of God, and stewards of the mysteries, stewards over the household of God, to give unto every one his portion." These apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, God hath given "for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

These things hath God done for us, from without us; he hath set up a light, chalked out our way, and appointed us guides. To which I might add the many incitements and motives which we call mercies or comforts of this life; and the many affrightments of judgment and afflictions which God hath added to the promises and threatenings of his word, to bring us into the way of life. But all these are too little, too weak of themselves to bring back a straggling soul, or to produce a living principle of true religion in it. Therefore,

2. God is the author of religion from within. He doth not only reveal himself and his Son to the soul, but in it; he doth not only make discoveries to it, but lively impressions upon it; he doth not

only appoint, and point out the way of life, but breathes in the breath of life. He hath not only provided a Saviour, a Redeemer, but he also draws the soul unto him. He hath not only appointed pastors and teachers, but he himself impregnates their word, and clothes their doctrine with his own power, using their ministry as an instrument whereby to teach; so that the children of God are said to be "all taught of God." Ministers can only discover, and as it were, enlighten the object; but God enlightens the faculty, he gives the seeing eye, and does actually enable it to discern. Therefore the work of converting a soul is still ascribed to God in scripture; he begets us again; he draws the soul, before it can run after him; Christ apprehends the soul, lays powerful hold of it. God gives a heart of flesh, a new heart; he causes men to walk in his statutes. He puts his law into their inward parts, and writes it in their hearts. To which I might add many more quotations of the same value.

But yet, methinks, we are not come to a perfect discovery of religion's being the offspring of God in the minds of men. For it is God who enlighteneth the faculty as to the learning of all other things also; he teacheth the grammar and the rhetoric, as well as the divinity; he instructeth even the husbandman to discretion in his affairs of husbandry, and teaches him to plough, and sow, and thrash, &c. Not only the gift of divine know-

ledge, but indeed “every good gift cometh from the Father of lights.” God doth from within give that capacity, illumination of the faculty, ingenuity, whereby we comprehend the mysteries of nature, as well as of grace.

Therefore we may conceive of the origin of religion in a more inward and spiritual manner still. It is not so much given of God, as itself is something of God in the soul; as the soul is not so properly said to give life, as to be the life of man. As the conjunction of the soul with the body is the life of the body, so verily the life of the soul stands in its conjunction with God by a spiritual union of will and affections. God doth not enlighten men’s minds as the sun enlightens the world, by shining unto them and round about them, but by shining into them, by enlightening the faculty, as I said before, yea, which seems to be somewhat more, by shining in their hearts, as the Apostle phraseth it. He sets up a candle, which is his own light within the soul; so that the soul sees God in his own light, and loves him with the love that he hath shed abroad in it; and religion is no other than a reflection of that divine image, life, and light, and love, which from God are stamped and imprinted upon the souls of true Christians. God is said to enlighten the soul, but it is not as the sun enlightens, that you see; so he draws the soul too, but not *ab extra* only, as one man draweth another with a cord, as Jupiter in Homer draws men up to heaven

by a chain, and Mahomet, his disciples by a lock of hair; but he draws the soul, as the sun draws up earthly vapours by infusing its virtue and power into them; or, as the loadstone draws the iron, by the powerful insinuations of his grace. God doth not so much communicate himself to the soul by way of discovery, as by way of impression, as I said before; and indeed not so much by impression either, as by a mystical and wonderful way of implantation. Religion is not so much something from God, as something of God in the minds of good men, for so the scripture allows us to speak: it is therefore called his image, and good men are said to “live according to God in the spirit;” but, as if that were not high enough, it is not only called his image, but even a participation of his divine nature, something of Christ in the soul, an Infant-Christ as one calls it, alluding to the Apostle, where the saving knowledge of Christ is called Christ himself,—“until Christ be formed in you.” True religion is, as it were, God dwelling in the soul, and Christ dwelling in the soul, as the Apostles St. John and St. Paul do express it: yea, God himself is pleased thus to express his relation to the pious soul—“I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a humble spirit;” and again—“As God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them.” Pure religion is a beam of the Father of lights, *lumen de lumine*; it is a drop of that eternal fountain of goodness and holiness, the breath of the

power of God, a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty, the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness, more beautiful than the sun, and above all the orders of stars; being compared with the light, she is found before it, as the author of the book of Wisdom speaks, chap. vii. What is spoken of the eternal Son of God, may in a sense, be truly affirmed of religion considered in the abstract, that it is "the effulgency or beaming forth of divine glory," Heb. i. 3; for there is more of the divine glory and beauty shining forth in one pious soul, than in all things in the world beside; the glorious light of the sun is but a dark shadow of the divine light, not to be compared with the beauty of holiness. An immortal soul doth more resemble the divine nature than any other created being; but religion in the soul is a thousand times more divine than the soul itself. The material world is indeed a darker representation of divine wisdom, power, and goodness; it is as it were the footsteps of God: the immaterial world of angels and spirits does represent him more clearly, and are the face of God: but holiness in the soul doth most nearly resemble him of all created things; one may call it the beauty and glory of his face. Every creature partakes of God indeed; he had no copy but himself and his own essence to frame the world by; so that all these must needs carry some resemblance of their Maker. But no creature is

capable of such communications of God as a rational immortal spirit is; and the highest that angel or spirit, or any created nature can be made capable of, is to be holy as God is holy. So then, if the poet may call the soul, and St. Paul allows him in it, a particle of the Divine essence; sure one may rather speak at that rate of religion, which is the highest perfection that the soul can attain to, either in the world that now is, or that which is to come. One soul, any one soul of man, is worth all the world beside for glory and dignity; but the lowest degree of true holiness, pure religion, conformity to the divine nature and will, is more worth than a world of souls, and to be preferred before the essence of angels. I have often admired three great mysteries and mercies, God revealed in the flesh, God revealed in the word, and God revealed in the soul: this last is the mystery of godliness which I am speaking of, but cannot fathom; it is this that the Apostle says transcends the sight of our eyes, the capacity of our ears, and all the faculties of our souls too, "Eye hath not seen," &c. Christ Jesus formed in the soul of man, incarnate in a heart of flesh, is as great a miracle, and a greater mercy, than Christ formed in the womb of a virgin, and incarnate in a human body. There was once much glorying concerning Christ in the world, the hope of Israel; but let us call out to the powers of eternity, and the ages of the world to come, to help us to celebrate and magnify Christ in us "the hope

of glory ;” or, if you will, Christ in us the first-fruits of glory. What has been said may,

First, Help us in our discoveries of that precious pearl, religion. There is nothing in the world that men do generally more seek, or less find : no nation in the world but hath courted it in one way or other ; but alas how few that have obtained it ! At this day there are many claims laid to it, all pretending a just title ; the men of Judah cry, She is of kin to us ; the men of Israel say, We have ten parts in this queen, and we have more right in religion than ye ; according as they contended of old about King David. They say of Christ, as it was foretold, though perhaps not in the same sense as was foretold, Lo, here he is ; and lo, there he is ; which hath made many say, he is not at all : or, if I may go on in the same allusion, they live by the rule that there follows, they will not go forth to seek him any where. Mighty strivings, yea, and wars there have been about the Prince of peace, whose he should be ; and at this day no question more debated, nor less decided, than, Which is the religious party in the land ? O would to God men would dispute this controversy with works and not with words, much less with blows ! Religion is of an eminent pedigree, of a noble descent ; you may find her name in the register of heaven, and look where God is, there is she. She carries her name in her forehead : the divine disposition that she is of, the divine works which she worketh, which no one else

can work, the same do bear witness which is she. I am ready to say with the man that had been blind, “herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not” religion who she is, and yet she is the mighty power of God opening the eyes, changing the hearts, and as it were edifying the souls of men. Why do we not also go about enquiring which of those many stars is the moon in the firmament? If ye ask which is the religious party? I will point you to the blessed and eternal God, and say, As he is, so are they, in their capacity, each one resembling the children of a king; or, I will point out the religious Christian by the same token as Christ himself was marked out to John the Baptist—“Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining, the same is he.” If ye enquire about the children of God, the Apostle shall describe them for you, the followers of God are his dear children. That which is most nearly allied to the nature and life of God, that call religion, under whatsoever disguises or reproaches it may go in the world. Examine the world by no lower a mark, than that character that is given of David, and the man that doth appear to be after God’s heart, namely, conformable to his image, compliant with his will, and studious of his glory, pitch upon him, for that is the man, under what name soever he goes, of what party or faction soever he is. And let no soul examine itself by any lower marks than this, *ἔστι τις Θεος ἔνδον*, “participation of the divine nature, conformity to

the divine image." Examine what alliance your soul hath to God, "whose is the image and superscription." Religion is a divine accomplishment, an efflux from God, and may, by its affinity to heaven, be discerned from a brat of hell and darkness. Therefore, Christians, if you will form a judgment of your state, lay your hearts and lives to the rule, the eternal goodness, the uncreated purity and holiness, and see whether you resemble that copy: for conformity to the image and will of God, that is religion; and that God will own for his, when all the counterfeits and shadows of it will fly away, and disappear for ever. I fear it may be imputed as a great piece of vanity and idle curiosity to many counterfeit speculative Christians, that they are very inquisitive, prying into the hidden rolls of God's decrees, the secrets of predestination, to find out the causes and method of their vocation and salvation; in the mean time they are not solicitous for, nor studious of the relation and resemblance that every religious soul bears unto God himself, the heaven that is opened within the pious soul itself, and the whole plot and mystery of salvation transacted upon the heart of a true Christian. There is a vanity which I have observed in many pretenders to nobility and learning, when men seek to demonstrate the one by their coat of arms, and the records of their family, and the other by a gown, or a title, or their names standing in the register of the university, rather than by the accomplish-

ments and behaviour of gentlemen or scholars. A like vanity, I doubt, may be observed in many pretenders to religion: some are searching God's decretals, to find their names written in the book of life; when they should be studying to find God's name written upon their hearts, holiness to the Lord engraven upon their souls: some are busy in examining themselves by notes and marks without them; when they should labour to find the marks and prints of God and his nature upon them: some have their religion in their books and authors, which should be the law of God written in the tables of the heart: some glory in the bulk of their duties, and in the multitude of their pompous performances, and religious achievements, crying, with Jehu, "Come, see here my zeal for the Lord;" whereas it were much more excellent, if one could see their likeness to the Lord, and the characters of divine beauty and holiness drawn upon their hearts and lives. But we, if we would judge rightly of our religious state, must view ourselves in God, who is the fountain of all goodness and holiness, and the rule of all perfection. Value yourselves by your souls, and not by your bodies, estates, friends, or any outward accomplishments, as most men do: but that is not enough; if men rest there, they make an idol of the fairest of God's creatures, even their own souls; therefore value your souls themselves by what they have of God in them. To study the blessed and glorious God in his word, and to con-

verse with him in his works, is indeed an excellent and honourable employment; but O what a blessed study it is to view him in the communications of himself, and the impressions of his grace upon our own souls! All the thin and subtile speculations which the most eminent philosophers have of the essence and nature of God are a poor, and low, and beggarly employment and attainment, in comparison of those blessed visions of God which a pious soul hath in itself, when it finds itself partaker of a divine nature, and living a divine life. O labour to view God and his divine perfections in your own souls, in those copies and transcripts of them which his Holy Spirit draws upon the hearts of all pious men. This is the most excellent discovery of God that any soul is capable of; it is better and more desirable than that famous discovery that was made to Moses in the cleft of the rock. Nay, I should much rather desire to see the real impression of a God-like nature upon my own soul, to see the crucifying of my own pride and self-will, the mortifying of a mere sensual life, and a divine life springing up in my soul instead of it; I would much rather desire to see my soul glorified in the image and beauty of God put upon it, which is indeed a pledge, yea, and a part of eternal glory, than to have a vision from the Almighty, or hear a voice witnessing from heaven, and saying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom my soul is well pleased." This that I am speaking

of is a true foundation of heaven itself in the soul, a real beginning of happiness; for happiness, heaven itself, is nothing else but a perfect conformity, a cheerful and eternal compliance of all the powers of the soul with the will of God: so that as far as a pious soul is thus conformed to God, and filled with his fulness, so far is he glorified upon earth. *Sed heu quantum distamus ab illo!*

Secondly, Let wisdom then be justified of her children; let the children of God, those that are his genuine offspring, rise up and call him blessed, in the imitation of their Lord and Saviour, that eldest Son of God, that "first-born amongst many brethren," who rejoiced in spirit, and said, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast revealed these things," or, according to the style of the apostle Peter, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again!" There is no greater contradiction in the world, than a man pretending religion, and yet ascribing it to himself; whereas pure religion is purely of a divine origin: besides, religion doth principally consist in the subduing of self-will, in conformity to, and compliance with the divine will, in serving the interest of God's glory in the world. Then, and not till then, may a soul be truly called religious, when God becomes greatest of all to it and in it, and the interest of God is so powerfully planted in it, that no other interest, no self-interest, no creature-love,

no particular private end, can grow by it, no more than the magicians could stand before Moses, when he came in the power of God to work wonders. So that what Solomon saith of self-seeking, "For men to seek their own glory is not glory;" the like I may safely say upon that double ground that I have laid down, self-religion is not religion. How vainly and madly do men dream of their self-religion carrying them to heaven; when heaven itself is nothing else but the perfection of self-denial, and God's becoming all things to the saints. Instead of advancing men towards heaven, there is nothing in the world that doth more directly make war against heaven, than that *γίγαντώδης ψυχῇ*, (as Siracides calls it) that proud and petulant spirit of self-will that rules in the children of disobedience. So that when the Holy Ghost would describe David one of the best men, to the best advantage, he describes him with opposition to self and self-will, "a man after God's own heart;" and again, "he served the will of God in his generation."

There have been of old a great number of philosophical men, who being raised up above the speculations of their own souls, which is the logical life, unto a contemplation of a deity; and being purged, by a lower kind of virtue and moral goodness, from the pollutions that are in this world through lust, did yet ultimately settle into themselves, and their own self-love. They were full indeed, but it was not with the fulness of God, as the Apostle speaks,

but with a self-sufficiency; the leaven of self-love lying at the bottom made them swell with pride and self-conceit. Now these men, though they were free from gross external enormities, yet did not attain to a true knowledge of God, nor any true religion, because they set up themselves to be their own idols, and carried such an image of themselves continually before their eyes, that they had no clear and spiritual discerning of God. They did, as it is storied of one of the Persian kings, enshrine themselves in a temple of their own. But what speak I of heathen philosophers? Is there not the same unclean spirit of self-adoration to be found amongst many Christians, yea, and teachers of Christianity too? witness that whole brood, those men, who, whilst they suspend the grace of God upon man's free will, do utterly rob him of his glory. Some of these have impudently given a short, but unsavoury answer to the Apostle's question, "Who maketh you to differ from another?" "I make myself to differ?" These men, while they pretend to high attainments, do discover a low and most ignoble spirit: to fasten and feed upon anything in the creature, is the part of a low and degenerate spirit; on the other hand, it is the greatest perfection of the creature, not to be its own, not to be anything in itself, or any way distinct from the blessed God, the Father and Fountain of light and grace. Holy Paul is all along in a different strain, as, "I, yet not I, but the grace of God

which was with me." I told you before what a fair and honourable character the Holy Ghost hath given of holy David, "a man after God's own heart:" now you may also find a description of these men too in scripture, not much differing from the other in phrase, but very much in sense; it is the same that is given of the proud prince of Tyrus—"They set their heart as the heart of God." But we, if we do indeed partake of the divine nature, shall not dare to take any part of the divine glory; if we conform to God's image, we shall not set up our own. This self-glorying, in the predominancy of it, is utterly inconsistent with true religion, as fire is with water; for religion is nothing else but the shinings forth of God into the soul, the reflection of a beauty and glory which God hath put upon it. Give all therefore unto God; for whatsoever is kept back, is sacrilegiously purloined from him: glory we in the fulness of God alone, and in self-penury and nothingness. The whole of religion is of God. Do we see and discern the great things of God? It is by that light that God hath set up in us; according to that of the Apostle—"The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." That love whereby we love him, he first shed abroad in our hearts. If our souls be beautiful, it is with his brightness, the beauty and glory of essential holiness, according to that of the Apostle—"Partakers of his holiness." If we be really and truly full, we receive it of his fulness, according to that of the

Apostle—"filled with all the fulness of God." In a word, if we be in any God-like dispositions, like unto him, it is by his spreading of his image in us, and over us. By all which, it appears to be a thing not only wicked and unwarrantable, but utterly impossible for a pious soul to exalt himself against God, for grace to advance itself against divine glory; for grace is nothing else but a communication of divine glory; and God is then glorified, when the soul in holy and gracious dispositions becomes like unto him. How is it possible that grace should be a shadow to obscure divine glory, when itself is nothing else, as it comes from God, but a beam of glory? and as it is found in the creature, may properly be called a reflection of it. To conclude then, be ye persuaded, that a man hath so much of God as he hath of humility, and self-denial, and self-nothingness, and no more; he is so far of God, as he loves him, honours him, imitates him, and lives to him, and no farther.

Thirdly, By this discovery of the origin of religion, we come to understand the origin of sin and wickedness. And here, according to the method wherein I spoke of the origin of religion, I might show you how the origin of sin from without is of the devil, who first ushered it into the world, and ceaseth not to tempt men to it continually; as also of men, who are his instruments; and that it does, in a sense, spring from many occasions without. But these things are more improperly said to be the

causes of sin. The inward cause is the corrupt heart of man, that unclean spirit, that diabolical nature, which is indeed the worst and most pernicious devil in the world to man. It is an old saying, one man is a devil to another; which though it be in some sense true, yet it is more proper to say, man is a devil to himself; taking the spirit and principle of apostacy, that rebellious nature, for the devil, which indeed doth best deserve that name. But yet, if we inquire more strictly into the origin and nature of this monster, we shall best know what to say of it, and how to describe it, by what we have heard of religion. Sin then, to speak properly, is nothing else but a degeneration from a holy state, an apostacy from a holy God. Religion is a participation of God, and sin is a straggling off from him. Therefore it is wont to be defined by negatives, a departure from God, a forsaking of him, a living in the world without him, &c. The soul's falling off from God, describes the general nature of sin; but then as it sinks into itself, or settles upon the world, and fastens upon the creature, or anything therein; so it becomes specified, and is called pride, covetousness, ambition, and by many other names. All souls are the offspring of God, were originally formed into his image and likeness; and when they express the purity and holiness of the divine nature, in being perfect as God is perfect, then are they called the children of God: but those impure spirits that

do lapse and slide from God, may be said to implant themselves into another stock by their own low and earthly lives, and are no more owned for the children of God, but “are of their father the devil.” By which you may understand the low and base origin of sin: nothing can be so vile as that which, to speak properly, is nothing else but a perfect falling off from glory itself. By this you may also by the way, take notice of the miserable condition of unholy souls. We need not call for fire and brimstone to paint out the wretched state of sinful souls. Sin itself is hell and death, and misery to the soul, as being a departure from goodness and holiness itself: I mean from God, in conjunction with whom the happiness, and blessedness, and heaven of a soul consist. Avoid it therefore, as you would avoid being miserable.

CHAP. II.

True religion described, as to the nature of it, by water ; a metaphor usual in the scriptures—1. By reason of the cleansing virtue of it—The defiling nature of sin, and the beauty of holiness manifested.—2. By reason of the quenching virtue of it—This briefly touched upon, and the more full handling of it referred to its proper place—The nature of religion described by a well of water—that it is a principle in the souls of men, proved by much scripture—An examination of religion by this test—by which examination are excluded all things that are merely external reformatations and performances instanced in—A godly man hath neither the whole of his business, nor his motives lying without him—In the same examination many things internal found not to be religion—it is no sudden passion of the mind—no, not though the same amount to an ecstasy—nor anything begotten and maintained by fancy, and the mere power of imagination.

I COME now to speak of the nature of true religion, which is here described by our blessed Lord, by “a well of water.” First, by water. Secondly, by a well of water. I shall speak something of both these, but more briefly of the former.

I. Pure religion, or gospel grace, is described by water. This is a comparison very familiar in the holy scriptures, both of the Old Testament and the New. By this similitude, gospel grace was typified

in the ceremonial law, wherein both persons and things, ceremonially unclean, were commanded to be washed in water, as is abundantly to be seen in that administration. Under this notion, the same grace is prayed for by the Psalmist, when he had defiled himself in the bed of a stranger—"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." He had drunk water out of a strange cistern, as his son Solomon describes that unclean act; and now he calls out for water from the fountain of grace to undefile him: he now cries out for water from the fountain of grace, the blessed Messiah, that sprung up into the world at Bethlehem, and that with more earnestness than formerly we read that he wished for the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate. In the same phrase the same grace is promised by the ministry of the Prophets, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto us. Thus we read of the fair and flourishing state of the church—"Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not;" and of the fruitful state of the gospel proselytes—"All the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim." Which promises, that they are understood of the grace of sanctification, the prophet Ezekiel showeth plainly—"I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you:" for ordinary

elementary water cannot cleanse men from idols. The prophet Isaiah also puts it out of doubt, whose prophecy, together with the interpretation of it, we find both in one verse—"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring." By the same ceremony, the gospel dispensation shadows out the same mystery in the sacrament of baptism; and, by the same phrase our Saviour offers and promises the same grace—"If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink:" and his apostles after him, who, in allusion to water, call this grace the "washing of regeneration." To which I might add 1 Pet. iii. 21, and many other texts if it required.

Now, as the grace of God is compared to fire, because of its refining nature, and consuming the dross and refuse of depravity in the soul; and to other things for other reasons: so it is compared to water, especially for those two properties, namely, cleansing and quenching; for observe this by the way, that it is a very injurious thing to the Holy Ghost, to press the metaphors which he useth in scripture, further than they do naturally and freely serve. Neither are we to adhere to the letter of the metaphor, but to attend unto the scope of it. If we tenaciously adhere to the phrase, wanton wits will be ready to quarrel with absurdities, and so unawares run into strange blasphemies: they will cry out presently, How can fire wash? when they read

that of the Prophet—"The Lord will wash away the filth of the daughter of Zion, by the spirit of burning." But who art thou, O man! that wilt teach him to speak who formed the tongue? The Spirit of God intends the virtue and property of things, when he names them; and that we must mainly attend to.

1. Therefore, by the phrase *water*, is the cleansing nature of religion commended to us: it is the undefiling of the soul, which sin and wickedness hath polluted: sin is often described in scripture by filthiness, loathsomeness, abomination, uncleanness, a spot, a blemish, a stain, a pollution; which indeed is a most proper description of it. The spots of leprosy, and the scurf of the foulest scurvy, are beauty spots in comparison of it; Job upon the dunghill, furnished cap-a-pee with scabs and boils, was not half so loathsome as goodly Absalom, in whose body "there was no blemish from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head;" but his soul was stained with the sanguine spots of malice and revenge, and festered with the loathsome carbuncle and tumour of ambition. Lazarus, lying at the gates full of raw and running sores, was a far more lovely object in the pure eyes of God, than dame Jezebel, looking out at the window, adorned with spots and paints. If the best of a godly man that he hath of his own, even his righteousness, be as a filthy rag, whence shall we borrow a phrase foul enough to describe the worst of a wicked man, even

his wickedness? I need say no more of it, I can say no worse of it, than to tell you it is something contrary to God, who is the eternal Father of light, who is beauty, and brightness, and glory itself; or, to give it you in the Apostle's phrase, "a falling short of the glory of God." Which hath made me many times to wonder, and almost ready to cry out with the Prophet, "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this!" when I have seen poor, ignorant, wicked, and profane wretches, passing by a person or a family visited with some loathsome disease, in a mixture of fear and disdain, stopping their breath, and hastening away; when their own souls have been more vile than the dung upon the earth, spotted with ignorance and atheism, swollen with the risings of pride and self-will, and contempt of God and his holy image. This might well be matter of wonder to any man, till he consider with himself, that one part of these men's uncleanness, is that very blindness which keeps them from discerning it: I speak principally of the defilement of the soul; though indeed the same do pollute the whole conversation: every action springing from such an unclean heart, thereby becomes filthy; even as Moses's hand, put into his bosom, became leprous; or rather as one that is unclean by a dead body, defileth all that he toucheth.

Now, religion is the cleansing of this unclean spirit and conversation; so that, though the soul were formerly as filthy and odious as Augeus's

stable, when once those living waters flow into it, and through it, from the pure fountain of grace and holiness, the Spirit of our God, one may say of it as the Apostle of his Corinthians, "Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified," &c. The soul that before was white as leprosy, is now white as wool. The soul that before was like Moses' hand, leprous as snow, is now like David's heart, white as snow; yea, and whiter too. O what a beauty and glory is upon that pious soul that shines with the image and brightness of God upon it! Solomon, in all his glory, was not beautiful like such a soul; nay, I dare say, the splendor of the sun, in its greatest strength and altitude, is a miserable glimmering, if it be compared with the day-star of religion, that even in this life arises in the heart; or, if you will, in the Prophet's style, "the Sun of righteousness, which ariseth with healing in his wings," upon them that fear the name of God. To speak without a metaphor, the pious soul, having received into itself, the pure effluxes of divine light and love, breathes after nothing more than to see more familiarly, and love more ardently: its inclinations are pure and holy; its motions spiritual and powerful; its delights high and heavenly; it may be said to rest in its love; and yet it may be said, that love will not suffer it to rest, but is still carrying it out into a more intimate union with its beloved object. What is said of the ointment of Christ's name, is true of

the water of his Spirit, it is "poured forth, therefore do the virgins love him." Religion begets a chaste and virgin love in the soul towards that blessed God that begot it; it bathes itself in the fountain that produced it: and suns itself perpetually in the warm beams that first hatched it. Religion issues from God himself, and is ever issuing out towards God alone, passionately breathing with the holy Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? In earth there is none that I desire beside thee!" The soul that formerly may be said to have lain among the pots, by reason of its filthiness, is now as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold: the soul that formerly may be said to have sat down by the flesh-pots of Egypt, in regard of its sensual and earthly loves, being redeemed by the almighty grace of God, is upon its way to the holy land, hastening to a country not earthly but heavenly. This pure principle being put into the soul, puts it upon holy studies, indites holy meditations, directs it to high and noble ends, and makes all its embraces to be pure and chaste, labouring to compass God himself, which before were adulterous and idolatrous; free for sin, and self, and the world, to lodge and lie down in. In a word, this offspring of heaven, this King's daughter, the pious soul, is "all glorious within;" yea, and outwardly too, "she is clothed with wrought gold." Here faith within is more precious than gold; and her conversation is curi-

ously made up of an embroidery of good works, some of piety, some of charity, some of sobriety, but all of purity, and shineth with more noble and excellent splendour, than the high-priest's garments and breast-plate spangled with such variety of precious stones. This precious ointment, this holy unction, as the Apostle calls it, is as diffusive of itself, and ten thousand times more fragrant, than that of Aaron, so much commended in Psal. cxxxiii. that ran down from his head upon his beard, and from thence upon the skirts of his garment. "Not my feet only, but my hands and my head, Lord," saith Peter, not well knowing what he said; but the soul that is truly sensible of the excellent purity which is caused by divine washings, longs to have the whole man, the whole life also, made partaker of it, and cries, Lord, not my head only, not my heart only, but my hands and my feet also; make me wholly pure, as God is pure. In a word then, true religion is the cleansing of the soul, and all the powers of it; so that, whereas murderers sometimes lodged in it, now righteousness; the den of thieves, thievish lusts, and loves, and interests, and ends, which formerly stole away the soul from God, its right owner, is now become a temple fit for the great King to dwell, and live, and reign in: and the whole conversation is turned from its wonted vanity, worldliness, and iniquity, and is continually employed about things that are "true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report."

2. By the phrase *water*, the quenching nature of religion is commended to us. God hath endued the immortal soul with a restless appetite, and raging thirst after some chief good, which the heart of every man is continually groping after, and catching at, though indeed few find it, because they seek it where it is not to be found. If we speak properly, it is not gold or silver, or popular applause, which the covetous or ambitious mind doth ultimately aim at, but some chief good, happiness, sufficiency, and satisfaction in these things; wherein they are more guilty of blasphemy than atheism: for it is clear that they do not deny a Supreme Good; for that which men do chiefly and ultimately aim at, is their god, be it what it will; but they do verily blaspheme the true God, when they place their happiness there where it is not to be found, and attribute that fulness and sufficiency to something else besides the living God. Sin hath not destroyed the nature and capacity of the rational soul, but hath diverted the mind from its adequate object, and hath sunk it into the creature, where it wanders hither and thither, like a banished man, from one den and cave to another, but is secure nowhere. A wicked man, who is loosed from his centre by sin, and departed from the fountain of his life, flies low in his affections, and flutters perpetually about the earth, and earthly objects, but can find no more rest for the foot of his soul, than Noah's dove could find for the sole of her foot.

Now, religion is the hand that pulls this wandering bird into her own ark from whence she was departed; it settles the soul upon its proper centre, and quenches its burning thirst after happiness. And hence it is called water in scripture, as appears from these expressions—"The Lord shall satisfy thy soul in drought;" and—"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground;" compared with—"Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." Religion is a taste of infinite goodness, which quenches the soul's thirst after all other created and finite good; even as that taste which honest Nathanael had of Christ's divinity, took him off from the expectation of any Messiah to come, and made him cry out presently, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." And every religious soul hath such a taste of God, even in this life, which, though it do not perfectly fill him, yet doth perfectly assure him where all fulness dwells. But of this I shall have occasion to discourse more largely, when I come to treat of the consequences of true religion.

I proceed, therefore, to the second phrase, whereby our Saviour describes the nature of true religion; it is a well, a fountain in the soul: "Shall be in him a well of water." From which phrase, to wave niceties, I shall only observe, "That Religion is a principle in the souls of men."

The water that Christ pours into the soul is not

like the water that he pours upon our streets, that washes them, and runs away; but it becomes a cleansing principle within the soul itself; every drop from God becomes a fountain in man; not as if man had a kind of *αυτοζωή* in himself, or were the first spring of his own motions towards God: I find not any will in the natural man so divinely free. God hath indeed given this to his own Son, his only begotten Son, to have “life in himself,” but not to any of his adopted ones. If you ask me concerning man in his natural capacity, I am so far from thinking that he hath a self-quickenings power, a principle of life in himself, that I must needs assert the contrary with the Apostle, that he is “dead in trespasses and sins;” so far from thinking that he hath in himself a well of water, that I must call him, with the Prophet, “thirsty and dry ground.” As for the regenerate man, I will not enter into that deep controversy concerning the co-operation of man’s will with the Spirit of God, and its subordination to that in all gracious acts, or what description of cause this renewed will of man may be safely called; only I will affirm, that repenting and believing are properly man’s acts, and yet they are performed by God’s power; first, Christ must give this water ere it can be a well of water in the soul; which is enough, I suppose, to clear me from siding with either of those parties, whether those that ascribe to God that which he cannot do, or those that ascribe to free will that

which God alone can do. But I fear nothing from these controversies; for that way wherein I shall discourse of this matter, will nothing at all border upon them. This, then, I affirm, that religion is a living principle in the souls of good men. I cannot better describe the nature of religion, than to say it is a nature; for so does the Apostle speak, or at least allows us to speak, when he calls it a participation of a divine nature. Nothing but a nature can partake of a nature; a man's friend may partake of his goodness and kindness, but his child only partakes of his nature; he that begets, begets a nature; and so doth he that procreates again. The sun enlightens the world outwardly, but it does not give a sun-like nature to the things so enlightened; and the rain doth moisten the earth, and refresh it inwardly, but it does not beget the nature of water in the earth: "But this water that I give," says our Saviour, "becometh a well of water in the soul." Religion is not anything without a man, hanging upon him, or annexed to him; neither is it every something that is in a man, as we shall see anon; but it is a divine principle informing and actuating the souls of good men, a living and lively principle, a free and flowing principle, a strong and lasting principle, an inward and spiritual principle. I must not speak of all these distinctly in this place, for fear of interfering in my discourse. When I say religion is a principle, a vital form acting the soul, and all the powers of it, an inward nature, &c.; saith not the

scripture the same here, a well or fountain of water? And elsewhere, a "new man, the hidden man of the heart, the inward man." As the soul is called an inward man, relative to the body, so religion is called an inward man, relative to the soul itself. It is a man within man. The man that is truly alive to God, hath in him not only inward parts, for so a dead man hath, but an inward man, an inward nature and principle. Again, it is called a root, Job xix. 28; or, if not there, yet plainly in Mark iv. 17, where temporary professors are said to have no root in themselves. And this is by the same propriety of speech whereby a wicked principle is called, "a root of bitterness." Again, it is called a seed, "the seed of God;" where this seed of God is called an abiding or remaining principle. In the first creation, God made the trees of the earth, having their seed in themselves; and in the new creation, these trees of righteousness of God's planting, are also made with seed in themselves, though not of themselves; it is said to be the seed of God indeed, but remaining in the pious soul. Again, it is called a treasure, in opposition to an alms or annuity, that lasteth but for a day or year, as a well of water, in opposition to a draught of water; and a treasure of the heart, in opposition to all outward and earthly treasures. It is a treasure affording continual expences, not exhausted, yea, increased by expences; wherein it exceeds all treasures in the world. By the same propriety of speech, sin is called a trea-

sure too, but it is an evil treasure, as our Saviour speaks in that same place. Do you not see what a stock of wickedness sinful men have within themselves, which, although they have spent upon ever since they were born, yet it is not impaired, nay, it is much augmented thereby; and shall not the second Adam bestow something as certain and permanent upon his offspring, as the first Adam conveyed to his posterity? Though men have something without them, to guide them in the way of life, yet it is some living principle within them, that denominates them living men. The scripture will abundantly inform you which is the true circumcision, the true sacrifice to God. And indeed the law itself is not so much to be considered as it was engraven in tables of stone, as "being written in the heart." The Jews needed not have taken up their rest in the law, considered as an outward rule or precept; for they knew or might have known, that God requireth "truth in the inward parts," as one of themselves, a prophet and king of their own, acknowledgeth. But I doubt many Christians are also sick of the same disease, whilst they view the gospel as a history, and an external dispensation; whereas the Apostle, when he opposeth it to the law, seems altogether to make it an internal thing, a vital form and principle seated in the minds and spirits of men. The law was an external rule or dispensation that could not give life, though it

showed the way to it; but the gospel, in the most proper notion of it, seems to be an internal impression from God, a living principle, whereby the soul is enabled to express a real conformity to God himself. If we consider the gospel in the history of it, and as a piece of book learning, it is as weak and impotent a thing as the law was; and men may be as remiss and formal in the profession of this as they were of that, which we see by daily sad experience. But if we consider the gospel as an efflux of life and power from God himself upon the soul, producing life wherever it comes, then we have a clear distinction between the law and the gospel; to which the Apostle seems to refer, when he calls the Corinthians "the epistle of Christ, not written with ink, nor in tables of stone, but with the Spirit of the living God, in fleshly tables of the heart." According to which notion of the law and gospel, I think we may, with a learned man of our own, come to a good understanding of that tormented text, Jer. xxx. 31, quoted by the Apostle—"This is the covenant that I will make, I will put my law into their minds," &c. The gospel doth not so much consist in words as in virtue; a divine principle of religion in the soul, is the best gospel: and so Abraham and Moses under the law, were truly gospellers; and, on the other hand, all carnal Christians that converse with the gospel only as a thing without them, are as truly legal, and as far short of the righteousness

of God, as ever any of the Jews were. Thus we see that religion is a principle in the souls of good men—"shall be in him a well of water."

We shall here now take notice of the difference between the true, and all counterfeit religions. Religion is that pearl of great price, which few men are possessed of, though all men pretend to it, Laodicean-like, saying, "they are rich and need nothing," when indeed "they are poor and have nothing." This, then, shall be the test by which, at present, we will a little try the counterfeit pearls. True religion is an inward nature, an inward and abiding principle in the minds of good men, a well of water.

1. Then we must exclude all things that are merely external; these are not it. Religion is not something annexed to the soul, *ab extra*, but a new nature put into it. And here we shall glance at two things:—

(1.) A pious soul does not find the whole of his business lying *without* him. Religion does not consist in external reformatations, though ever so many and specious. A false and slight religion may serve to tie men's hands, and reduce their outward actions to a fair seemliness in the eyes of men: but true religion's main dominion and power is over the soul, and its business lies mostly in reforming and purging the heart, with all the affections and motions thereof. It is not a battering ram coming from without, and serving to beat down the out-

works of open and visible enormities of life, but it enters with a secret and sweet power into the soul itself, and reduces it from its rebellious temper, and persuades it willingly to surrender itself, and all that is in it. Sin may be beaten out of the outward conversation, and yet retire and hide itself in the secret places of the soul, and there bear rule as perfectly by wicked loves and lusts, as ever it did by profane and notorious practices. A man's hands may be tied by some external cords cast upon them, from visible revenge, and yet murders may lodge in the temple of his heart, as murderers lodged in the temple of old: men's tongues may be tied up from the foul sin of giving fair words concerning themselves; very shame may chastise them out of proud boastings, and self-exaltings, when, in the meantime, they swell in self-conceit, and are not afraid to bear an unchaste and sinful love towards their own perfections, and adore an image of self set up in their hearts. What a fair outside the Pharisee had, himself will best describe, for indeed it is one of his properties to describe himself, "God, I thank thee that I am not," &c. But if you will have a draught of his inside, you may best take it from our Saviour, Matt. xxiii. 23. Neither doth religion consist in external performances, though ever so many, and seemingly spiritual. Many professors of Christianity, I doubt, sink all their religion into a constant course of duties, and a model of performances, being mere strangers to the life, and

strength, and sweetness of true religion. Those things are needful, and useful, and helpful, yea, and honourable, because they have a relation and some tendency to God ; but they are apt to become snares and idols to superstitious minds, who conceit that God is some way gratified by these ; and so they take up their rest in them. That religion, which only varnishes and beautifies the outside, tunes the tongue to prayer and conference, instructs and extends the hands to diligence and alms-deeds, which awes the conversation into some external righteousness or devotion, is here excluded, as also by the Apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. 1. Much less can that pass for religion, which spends itself about forms, and opinions, and parties, and many disputable points, which we have seen so much of in our own generation. The religion that runs upon modes, and turns upon interests, as a door turns upon its hinges, is a poor narrow scant thing, and may easily view itself at once, altogether from first to last. Men may be as far from the kingdom of heaven in their more spiritual forms, and orthodox opinions, as they were in their more carnal and erroneous, if they take up their rest in them : neither is it the pursuing of any interest that will denominate them religious, but the grand interest of their souls.

(2.) A pious soul in its more inward and spiritual acts, hath not its motive *without* it : for a man may be somewhat more inward in his emotions, and yet as outward in his motives as the former. Religious

acts, and gracious emotions, are not originally and primarily caused by some weights hung upon the soul, either by God or men, neither by the worldly blessings which God gives, nor the heavy afflictions which he sends. The wings, by which the pious soul flies out towards God, are not waxed to it, as the poets feign Icarus's to have been; but they grow out of itself, as the wings of an eagle that flies swiftly towards heaven: on the other side, a soul may be pressed down unto humiliation under the heavy weight of God's judgments, that has no mind to stoop, no self-denying or self-abasing disposition in it. Thus you may see Jehu flying upon the wings of ambition and revenge, borne up by successes in his government; and his predecessor Ahab bowing down mournfully under a heavy sentence. The laws, and penalties, and encouragements, and observations of men, sometimes put a weight upon the soul too, but they beget a more sluggish, uneven, and unkindly movement in it. You may expect that under this head I should speak something of heaven and hell: and truly so I may very pertinently, for I think they belong to this place. If you take heaven properly, for a full and glorious union to God, and fruition of him, and hell for an eternal separation and straggling from the divinity; and suppose that the love of God, and the fear of living without him, be well drunk into the soul, then verily these are pure and religious principles: but if we view them as things merely without us, and reserved

for us, and under those common carnal notions of delectableness and dreadfulness, they are no higher nor better motives to us, than the carnal Jews had in the wilderness, when they turned their backs upon Egypt, where they had been in bondage, and set their faces towards Canaan, where they hoped to find milk and honey, peace, plenty, and liberty. A soul is not carried to heaven, as a body is carried to the grave, upon men's shoulders; it is not borne up by props, whether human or divine; nor carried to God in a chariot, as a man is carried to see his friend; the holy fire of ardent love, wherein the soul of Elijah had been long carried up towards God, was something more excellent, and indeed more desirable, than the fiery chariot by which his body and soul were translated together. Religion is a spring of motion which God hath put into the soul itself.

And as all things that are external, whether actions or motives, are excluded in this examination, which we make of religion; so neither,

2. Must we allow of every thing that is internal to be religion. And therefore,

(1.) It is not a fit, a start, a sudden passion of the mind, caused by the power and strength of some present conviction in the soul, which, in a hot mood, will needs set out after God in all haste. This may fitly be compared to the rash and rude motion of the host of Israel, who, being chidden for their slothfulness over night, rose up early in the

morning, and gat them up to the top of the mountain, saying, "Lo we be here, and will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised, for we have sinned." And indeed it fares with these men oftentimes as it did with those, both as to the undertaking, and as to the success; their motion is as sinful as their station; and their success is answerable, they are driven back and discomfited in their enterprize. Nay, though this passion might arise so high, as to be called an ecstasy or a rapture, yet it deserves not the name of religion: "For religion is," as one speaks elegantly, "like the natural heat that is radicated in the hearts of living creatures, which hath the dominion of the whole body, and sends forth warm blood and spirits, and vital nourishment into every part and member; it regulates and orders the motions of it in a due and even manner." But these extatical souls, though they may blaze like a comet, and swell like a torrent or land-flood for a time, and shoot forth fresh and high for a little season, are soon extinguished, emptied, and dried up, because they have not a principle, a stock to spend upon, or, as our Saviour speaks, "no root in themselves." These men's motions and actions bear no more proportion to religion, than a land-flood that swells high, and runs swiftly, but it is only during the rain; or, in the scripture phrase, than a morning dew that soon passes away, is like a well or fountain of water.

(2.) If religion be a principle, a new nature in

the soul, then it is not mere mechanism, a piece of art. Art imitates nature: nothing more common, I doubt, than for religion itself, that new nature, to go into an art. I need not tell you how all the external acts and shootings forth of religion, may be dissembled and imitated by art, and be acted over by a mimical apish Pharisee, who finds nothing at all of the gentle and mighty heat, nor the divine and noble life of it in his own soul, whereby he may fairly deceive the credulous world, as I have partly hinted already. But it is possible, I wish it be not common, for men that are somewhat more convinced, enlightened, and affected, to imitate the very power and spirit of religion, and to deceive themselves too, as if they possessed some true, living principle; and herein they exceed the most exquisite painters. Now, this may be done by the power of a quick and raised fancy; men hearing such glorious things spoken of heaven, the city of the great King, the new Jerusalem, may be carried out by the power of self-love to wish themselves there, being mightily taken with a conceit of the place. But how shall they come at it? Why, they have seen in books, and heard in discourses, of certain signs of grace, and evidences of salvation; and now they set their fancies to work, to find or make some such things in themselves. Fancy is well acquainted with the several affections of love, fear, joy, grief, which are in the soul, and having a great command over the animal spirits, it can send

them forth to raise up these affections, even almost when it listeth ; and when it hath raised them, it is but putting to some thoughts of God and heaven, and then these look like a handsome platform of true religion drawn in the soul, which they presently view, and fall in love with, and think they do even taste of the powers of the world to come, when indeed it is nothing but a self-fulness and sufficiency that they feed upon. Now, you may know this artificial religion by this : these men can vary it, alter it, enlarge it, straiten it, and new-mould it at pleasure, according to what they see in others, or, according to what themselves like best ; one while acting over the joy and confidence of some Christians, anon the humiliation and broken-heartedness of others. But this fanciful religion, proceeding indeed from nothing but low and carnal conceits of God and heaven, is of a flitting and vanishing nature. But true Christians are gently, yet powerfully moved by the natural force of true goodness, and the excellencies of God, and move on steadily and constantly in their way to him and pursuit of him. The spirit of regeneration in good men spreads itself upon the understanding, and sweetly diffuses itself through the will and affections, which makes true religion to be a consistent and thriving principle in the soul, as not being acted upon the stage of imagination, but upon the highest powers of the soul itself, and it may be discerned by the evenness of its movements, and the immortality of its nature ;

for a good man, though indeed he cannot go on always with like speed and cheerfulness in his way, yet is not willing at any time to be quite out of it.

By this same nature of true religion you may examine all those spurious and counterfeit religions, that spring from a natural belief of a deity, from convictions, observations, fleshly and low apprehensions of heaven, book-learning, and the precepts of men, as the Prophet calls them, and the rest, which are seated in the fancy, and swim in the brain; whose effect is but to gild the outward man, or, at best, but to move the soul by an external force, in an unnatural, inconstant and transient manner. In a word, all these pretenders to religion may seem to have water, but they have no well: as there are others, deep men, principled indeed with learning, policy, ingenuity, &c. but not with true goodness, whom the Apostle calls wells, but without water. But the truly pious, and God-like soul, hath in itself a principle of pure religion. “The water that I shall give him, shall be a well of water, springing up into eternal life.”

CHAP. III.

Containing the first property mentioned of true religion—namely, The freeness and unconstrainedness of it—this discovered in several outward acts of morality and worship—as also in the more inward acts of the soul—This freedom considered first as to its author—in which is examined how far the command of God may be said to upon act a pious soul.—Secondly, Considered as to its object—Two cautionary concessions—1. That some things without the soul may be said to be motives—how far afflictions and temporal prosperity may be said to be so—2. That there is a constraint lying upon the pious soul—which yet takes not away its freedom—An inquiry into forced devotion—first, into the causes of it, namely, Men themselves, and that upon a threefold account, other men, or the providences of God—and next, into the properties of it, proving that it is for the most part dry and spiritless, needy and penurious, uneven, and not permanent.

I PROCEED now, from the nature of religion, to speak of the properties of it, as many of them as are couched under this phrase, “springing up into everlasting life.” Not to push the phrase any farther than it will naturally afford discourse, I shall only take notice of these three properties of true religion, contained in the word, “springing up,” namely, the freeness, activity, and permanency, or perseverance of it.

The first property of it, couched under this phrase, is, that it is free and unconstrained. Religion is a principle, and it flows and acts freely in the soul, after the manner of a fountain; and, in the day of its mighty power, makes the people a willing people, and the soul, in whom it is truly seated, to become a free will-offering unto God. Alexander the Great subdued the world with force of arms, and made men rather his tributaries and servants, than his lovers and friends; but the great God, the King of souls, obtains an amicable conquest over the hearts of his people, and overpowers them in such a manner, that they love to be his servants, and do willingly and readily obey him, without dissimulation or constraint, without mercenariness or morosity: in which they are unlike to the subjects of the kingdoms of this world, who are kept in their duties by fear and force, not from a pure kindness and benevolence of mind, to whom "the present yoke is always grievous." Hence it is that the increase of this people is called their flowing unto the Lord, "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established, and all nations shall flow unto it;" and again, "They shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord." And the disposition of this people is described to be a hearty and willing frame, Eph. vi. 6, 7, and elsewhere often to the same purpose. Now this willingness or freeness of pious souls might be explained and confirmed by the consideration both of their outward and inward acts.

1. As to the outward acts of service which the true Christian doth perform, he is freely carried out towards them, without any constraint or force. If he keep himself from the evil of the place, and age, and company, wherein he lives and converses, it is not by a restraint which is upon him merely from without him, but by a principle of holy temperance planted in the soul: it is the seed of God abiding in him that preserves him from the commission of sin. He is not kept back from sin as a horse by a bridle, but by an inward and spiritual change made in his nature. On the other hand, if he employ himself in any external acts of moral or instituted duty, he does it freely, not as of necessity or by constraint. If you speak of acts of charity, the pious man gives from a principle of love to God, and kindness to his brother, and so cheerfully, not grudgingly, or of necessity. An alms may be wrung out of a miser; but it proceeds from the liberal soul as a stream from its fountain: therefore he is called a deviser of liberal things, and one that standeth upon liberalities, as those last words of Isa. xxxii. 8, are rendered by the Dutch translators. If you speak of righteousness or temperance, he is not overruled by power, or compelled by laws, but indeed actuated by the power of that law which is written and engraven upon his mind. If you speak of acts of worship, whether moral or instituted, in all these he is also free, as to any constraint. Prayer is not his task, or a piece of

penance, but it is the natural cry of the new-born soul ; neither does he take it up as a piece of policy, to bribe God's justice, or engage men's charity, to purchase favour with God or man, or his own clamorous conscience : but he prays, because he wants, and loves, and believes ; he wants the fuller presence of that God whom he loves ; he loves the presence which he wants ; he believes that he that loves him will not suffer him to want any good thing that he prays for. And therefore he does not bind up himself severely, and limit himself penuriously to a morning and evening sacrifice and solemnity, as unto certain rent-seasons, wherein to pay a homage of dry devotion ; but his loving and longing soul, disdaining to be confined within canonical hours, is frequently soaring in some heavenly raptures or other, and sallying forth in holy ejaculations : he is not content with some weak essays towards heaven, in set and formal prayer, once or twice a-day, but labours also to be all the day long drawing in those divine influences, and streams of grace, by the mouth of faith, which he begged in the morning by the tongue of prayer ; which has made me sometimes to think it a proper speech to say, the faith of prayer, as well as the prayer of faith ; for believing, and hanging upon divine grace, doth really drink in what prayer opens its mouth for, and is, in effect, a powerful kind of praying in silence : by believing we pray, as well as in praying we believe. A truly religious

man hath not his hands tied up merely by the force of a national law, no, nor yet by the authority of the fourth commandment, to keep one in seven, a day of rest ; as he is not content with mere resting upon the Sabbath, knowing that neither working, nor ceasing from work, doth of itself commend a soul to God, but doth press after intimacy with God in the duties of his worship ; so neither can he be content with one Sabbath in a week, nor think himself absolved from holy and heavenly meditations any day in the week ; but labours to make every day a Sabbath, as to the keeping of his heart up unto God in a holy frame, and to find every day to be a Sabbath, as to the communications of God unto his soul : though the necessities of his body will not allow him, it may be, (though indeed God hath granted this to some men) to keep every day as a Sabbath of rest ; yet the necessities of his soul do call upon him to make every day, as far as may be, a Sabbath of communion with the blessed God. If you speak of fasting, he keeps not fasts merely by virtue of civil, no, nor a divine institution ; but, from a principle of godly sorrow afflicts his soul for sin, and daily endeavours more and more to be emptied of himself, which is the most excellent fasting in the world. If you speak of thanksgiving, he does not give thanks by laws and ordinances, but having in himself a law of thankfulness, and an ordinance of love engraven upon, and deeply radicated in his soul, delights to live unto God, and

to make his heart and life a living descant upon the goodness and love of God ; which is the most divine way of thank-offering in the world ; it is the hallelujah which the angels sing continually. In a word, wherever God hath a tongue to command, true godliness will find a hand to perform ; whatever yoke Christ Jesus shall put upon the soul, religion will enable to bear it, yea, and to count it easy too ; the mouth of Christ hath pronounced it easy, and the Spirit of Christ makes it easy. Let the commandment be what it will, it will not be grievous. The same spirit doth, in some measure, dwell in every Christian, which without measure dwelt in Christ, who counted it his meat and drink to do the will of his Father.

2. And more especially, the true Christian is free from any constraint as to the inward acts which he performeth. Holy love to God is one principal act of the gracious soul, whereby it is carried out freely, and with an ardent love towards the object that is truly and infinitely lovely and satisfactory, and to the enjoyment of it. I know indeed that this springs from self-indigency, and is commanded by the sovereignty of the Supreme Good, the object that the soul eyes : but it is properly free from any constraint. Love is an affection that cannot be extorted as fear is ; nor forced by any external power, nor indeed internal either : the revenues of the King of Persia, or the treasures of Egypt, cannot commit a rape upon it, neither indeed can the soul

itself raise and lay this spirit at pleasure ; which made the poet complain of himself, as if he were not sole emperor at home.

Though the outward bodily acts of religion are ordinarily compelled, yet this pure, chaste, virgin affection cannot be forced ; it seems to be kind a of a peculiarity in the soul, though under the jurisdiction of the understanding. By this property of it, it is elegantly described by the Spirit of God, “ If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.” It cannot be bought with money, or money-worth, cannot be purchased with gifts or arts ; and if any should offer to bribe it, it would give him a sharp and scornful check, in the language of Peter to Simon, “ Thy money perish with thee ;” love is no hireling, no base-born mercenary affection, but noble, free, and generous. Neither is it low-spirited and slavish, as fear is : therefore, when it comes to full age, it will not suffer the son of the bond-woman to divide the inheritance, the dominions of the soul with it ; when it comes to be “ perfect, it casteth out fear,” says the Apostle. Neither indeed is it directly under the authority of any law, whether human or divine : it is not begotten by the influence of a divine law, as a law, but as holy, just, and good, as we shall see more anon : the law of love ; or, if you will, in the Apostle’s phrase, “ the spirit of love, and of power,” in opposition to the spirit of fear, doth more influence the believer in his pur-

suit of God than any law without him : this is as a wing to the soul ; whereas outward commandments are but as guides in his way, or, at most, but as spurs in his sides.

The same I may say of holy delight in God, which is indeed the flower of love, or love grown up to its full age and stature, which hath no torment in it, and consequently no force upon it. Like unto which are holy confidence, faith, and hope, ingenuous and natural acts of the religious soul, whereby it hastens into the divine embraces, “as the eagle hasteneth to the prey,” swiftly and speedily, and not by force and constraint; “as a fool to the correction of the stocks,” or a bear to the stake. These are all genuine offsprings of holy religion in the soul, and they are utterly incapable of force; violence is contrary to the nature of them; for to use the Apostle’s words, with the change of one word, “Hope that is forced, is not hope.”

Now a little farther to explain this excellent property of true religion, we may a little consider the author, and the object of it.

The author of this noble and free principle is God himself, who hath made it a partaker of his own nature, the agency of which is free; himself is the fountain of his own acts. The uncreated life and liberty hath given this privilege to the religious soul, in some sense, to have life and liberty in itself, and a dominion over its own acts. I do not know that any created being in the world hath more of

divinity in it than the soul of man, as Cicero expresses himself; nor that anything in the soul doth more resemble the divine essence, than the noble freedom which the soul hath in itself; which freedom is never so divine and generous, as when it has God himself for its object. This excellent freedom is something of God in the soul of man, and therefore may justly claim the free spirit for its author; or the Son of God for its origin, according to that expression in John viii. 36, "If the Son shall make you free, then shall ye be free indeed."

But here it may be demanded, whether the command of God doth not actuate the pious soul, and set it upon its holy emotions? I confess indeed that the command of God is much eyed by a godly man, and is of great weight with him, and does in some sense, lay a constraint upon him; but yet I think not so much the authority of the law, as the reasonableness and goodness of it, prevail principally with him. The religious soul does not so much eye the law under the notion of a command, as under the notion of holy, just, and good, as the Apostle speaks, and so embraces it, chooses it, and longs to be perfectly conformable to it. I do not think it so proper to say that a good man loves God, and all righteousness and holiness, and religious duties, by virtue of a command to do so, as by virtue of a new nature that God hath put into him, which doth instruct and prompt him so to do. A religious soul being reconciled to the nature of

God, does embrace all his laws by virtue of the equitableness and perfection that he sees in them; not because they are commanded, but because they are in themselves to be desired, as David speaks, Psal. xix. 10. In which Psalm the holy man gives us a full account why he did so love and esteem the laws and commandments of God, namely, because they are perfect, right, pure, clean, true, sweet, and lovely, as you will find, ver. 7—10. To love the Lord our God with all our heart, and strength, and mind, is not only a duty, by virtue of that first and great commandment that doth require it; but indeed the highest privilege, honour, and happiness of the soul. To this purpose may that profession of the Psalmist's be applied—"I have chosen thy precepts;" and, "I have chosen the way of truth." Choosing is an act of judgment and understanding, and respects the quality of the thing, more than the authority of the command. David did not stumble into the way of truth accidentally, by virtue of his education, or acquaintance, or the like circumstance; nor was he lashed or driven into it by the mere severity of a law without him; but he *chose* the way of truth, as that which was indeed most eligible, pleasant, and desirable. What our blessed Saviour says concerning himself, is also true of every true Christian in his measure; he makes it his meat and drink to do the will of God. Now, we know that men do not eat and drink because physicians prescribe it as a means to preserve life; but the sensual

appetite is carried out towards food, because it is good, sweet, and suitable: and so the spiritual appetite is carried out towards spiritual food, not so much by the force of an external precept, as by the attractive power of that higher good which it finds suitable and sufficient for it. As for the object of this free and generous spirit of religion, it is no other than God himself principally and ultimately, and other things only as they are subservient to the enjoyment of him. God, as the Supreme Good, able to fill, and perfectly satisfy all the wants and indigencies of the soul, and so to make it wholly and eternally happy, is the proper object of the soul's most free and cheerful movements. The soul eyes God as the perfect and absolute Good, and God in Christ as an attainable good, and so finds every way enough in this object, to encourage it to pursue after him, and throw himself upon him. Religion fixes upon God, as upon its own centre, as upon its proper and adequate object; it views God as the infinite and absolute Good, and so is drawn to him without any external force. The pious soul is overpowered indeed, but it is only with the infinite goodness of God, which exercises its sovereignty over all the faculties of the soul: which overpowering is so far from straitening or pinching it, that it makes it truly free and generous in its motions. Religion wings the soul, and makes it take a flight freely and swiftly towards God and eternal life: it is of God, and by a sympathy that it hath with

him, it carries the soul out after him, and into conjunction with him. In a word, the pious soul being loosed from self-love, emptied of self-fulness, beaten out of all self-satisfaction, and delivered from all self-confining lusts, wills, interests, and ends, and being mightily overcome with a sense of a higher and more excellent good, goes after that freely, centres upon it firmly, grasps after it continually, and had rather be that than what itself is, as seeing that the nature of that Supreme Good is infinitely more excellent and desirable than its own.

Thus have I briefly explained and confirmed the freeness of this principle in the truly pious soul: I would now make some little improvement of it, but that it seems needful I should here interweave a cautionary concession or two.

1. It must be granted, that some things without the soul may be motives, in our common sense, and encouragements to the soul to quicken, and hasten, and strengthen it in its religious acts. Though grace be an internal principle, and most free from any constraint, yet it may be excited, or stirred up, as the Apostle speaks, 2 Tim. i. 6, by such means as God hath appointed hereunto, as prayer, meditation, reading, as the Apostle intimates in the body of that fore-quoted Epistle. But perhaps there will a question arise concerning some other things, which may seem to lay a constraint upon the spirits of men. I deny not but that the seemingly religious emotions of many men are merely violent, and their

devotion is purely forced, as we shall see by and by; but I affirm, and I think have confirmed it, that true and sincere religion is perfectly free and unconstrained. This being premised; now, if you ask me, what I think of afflictions; I confess God doth ordinarily use them as means to make good men better, and it may be sometimes to make bad men good: these may be as weights to hasten and speed the soul's motion towards God, but they do not principally originate such motions. If you ask me of temporal prosperity, commonly called mercies and blessings, of promises and rewards propounded; I confess they may be as oil to the wheels, and ought to quicken and encourage to the study of true and powerful godliness; but they are not the spring of the soul's emotions; they ought to be unto us, as dew upon the grass to refresh and fructify the soul; but it is the root which properly gives life and growth.

2. It may be granted, that there is a kind of constraint and necessity lying upon the pious soul in its holy and most excellent motions: according to that of the Apostle—"The love of Christ constraineth us;" and again—"Necessity is laid upon me" to preach the gospel. But yet it holds good, that grace is a most free principle in the soul, and that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. For the constraint that the Apostle speaks of is not opposed to freedom of soul, but to not acting; now although the soul, so principled and spirited,

cannot but act, yet it acts freely. Those things that are according to nature, though they be done necessarily, yet are they done with the greatest freedom imaginable. The water flows, and the fire burns necessarily yet freely. Religion is a new nature in the soul; and the religious soul being touched effectually with the sense, and impressed with the influences of divine goodness, fulness, and perfection, is carried indeed necessarily towards God, as its proper centre, and yet its motions are pure, free, generous, and with the greatest delight and pleasure conceivable. The necessity that lay upon Paul to preach the gospel is not to be understood of any external violence that was done to him, much less of bodily necessity, by reason of which many men serve their own bellies in that great function, more than the Lord Jesus; for though he preached the gospel necessarily, yet did he preach freely and willingly, as he often professeth. The pious man cannot but love God as his chief good, yet he delights in this necessity under which he lieth, and is exceeding glad that he finds his heart framed and enlarged to love him. I say enlarged, because God is such an object, as does not contract and pinch and straiten the soul, as all created objects do, but ennoble, amplate, and enlarge it. The sinful soul, the more it lets out, and lays out, and spends itself upon the creature, the more it is straitened and contracted, and the native freedom of it is enslaved, debased, and destroyed; but grace does establish

and ennoble the freedom of the soul, and restore it to its primitive perfection : so that a pious soul is never more at large, more at rest, more at liberty, than when it finds itself delivered from all self-confining creature-loves and passions and under the most powerful influences and constraint of infinite love and goodness.

By this that hath been said of the free and generous spirit of true religion, we may learn what to think of the forced devotion of many pressed soldiers of Christ in his church militant ; that there is a vast difference and distance between the pressed, and unpressed Christian. Though indeed the freedom of the will cannot be destroyed, yet, in opposition to a principle, many men's devotion may be said to be wrung out of them, and their obedience may be said to be constrained. I shall explain it briefly in two or three particulars.

(1.) Men force themselves, many times, to some things in religion that are besides, yea, and against their nature and genius. I need not instance in a slight conformity to the letter of the law, and some external duties which they force themselves to perform, as to hear, pray, give alms, or the like : in all which the violent and unnatural obedience of a Pharisee may be more popular and specious, than the true and genuine obedience of a free-born disciple of Jesus Christ. If going on hunting, and catching of venison might denominate a good and dutiful son, Esau may indeed be as acceptable to

his father as Jacob; but God is not such a father as Isaac, whose affections were bribed with fat morsels; he feeds not upon the pains of his children, nor lives on the sweat of their brows. I doubt not but that an unprincipled Christian, that hath the heart of a slave, may also force himself to imitate the more spiritual part of religion, and, as it were, to act over the very temper and disposition of a son of God. Therefore we read of a semblance of joy and zeal which was found in some, whom yet our Saviour reckons no better than stony ground, and of great ecstasies in others, whom yet the Apostle supposes may come to nothing, and what appearance of the most excellent and divine graces of patience, and contempt of the world, many of the sourer sort of monastical devotees, and our mongrel breed of Catholics, the Quakers, do make at this day, all men know: nay, some of the last sort do seem to themselves, I believe, to act over the temper and experience of the chief Apostles, rejoicing with Peter, and the rest, that they are "counted worthy to suffer shame," and keeping a catalogue of their stripes with Paul, and in these things I am confident, to use the Apostle's words, that they think themselves "not a whit behind the very chief Apostles:" nay, they are not ashamed to lay claim to that grace of graces, self-denial, which they have forced themselves to act over so artificially, that even a wise man might almost be deceived into a favourable opinion of them, but that we know that

whilst they profess it they destroy it; for it is contrary to the nature of self-denial, to magnify and boast itself: and indeed it is very evident to a wise observer, that these men, by a pretence of voluntary humility, and counterfeit self-denial, do, in truth, endeavour most of all to establish their own righteousness, and erect an idol of self-supremacy in themselves, and do really fall in love with an *αὐτάρκεια*, or self-sufficiency, instead of the infiniteness of God.

Now there seem to be three things in a formal hypocrite that do especially force a kind of devotion, and show of religion from him, namely, consciousness of guilt, self-love, and false apprehensions of God. 1st. There is in all men a natural consciousness of guilt, arising from that imperfect and glimmering light they have of God, and of their duty towards him; which, though it be in some men more quick and stinging, in others more remiss and languid, yet, I think, is not utterly extinguished and choked, no, not in the worst and most dissolute men, but that it doth sometimes beget a bitter sadness in the midst of their sweetest merriments, and doth disturb their most supine and secure rest, by fastening its stings in their very souls at some time or other, and filling them with agonies and anguish, and haunting them with dreadful apparitions, which they cannot be perfectly rid of, any more than they can run away from themselves. This foundation of hell is laid in the

bowels of sin itself, as a preface to eternal horror. Now, although some more profligate and desperate wretches do furiously bluster through these briars, yet others are so caught in them, that they cannot escape these pangs and throes, except they make a composition, and enter into terms to live more honestly, or at least, less scandalously. In which undertaking they are carried on in the second place, by the power of self-love, or a natural desire of self-preservation : for the worst of men hath so much reason left him, that he could wish that himself were happy, though he hath not so much light as to discover, nor so much true freedom of will as to choose, the right way to happiness. Conscience having discovered the certain reward and wages of sin, self-love will easily prompt men to do something or other to escape it. But now, what shall they do? why, religion is the only expedient that can be found out; and therefore they begin to think how they may become friends with God; they will up and be doing. But how come they to run into so great a mistake about religion? why, their false and gross apprehensions of God, in the third place, do drive them from him, in the way of superstition and hypocrisy, instead of leading them in the way of sincere love, and self-resignation to him. Self being the great Diana of every natural man, and the only standard by which he measures all things, he knows not how to judge of God himself, but by this; and so he comes to fancy God in a dreadful

manner, as an austere, passionate, surly, revengeful majesty, and so something must be done to appease him: but yet he fancies this angry Deity to be of an impotent, mercenary temper like himself, and not hard to be appeased either; and so imagines that some cheap services, specious oblations, external courtesies, will engage him, and make him a friend; a sheep, or a goat, or a bullock, under the Old Testament; a prayer, or a sacrament, or an alms, under the New: for it is reconciliation to an angry God that he aims at, not union with a good God; he seeks to be reconciled to God, not united to him, though indeed these two can never be divided. Thus we see how a man void of the life and spirit of religion, yet forces himself to do God a kind of worship, and pay him a kind of homage.

(2.) Sometimes men may be said, in a sense, to be forced by other men, to put on a mask of holiness, a dress of religion. And this constraint men may lay upon men by their tongues, hands, and eyes. By their tongues, in the business of education, often and ardent exhortation and inculcation of things divine and heavenly; and thus an unjust man, like the unjust judge in the gospel, though he fear not God sincerely, yet may be overcome by the importunity of his father, friend, minister, tutor, to do some righteous acts. This seems to have been the case of Joash king of Judah, the spring-head of whose religion was no higher than the instructions of his tutor and guardian Jehoiada the high-priest.

By their hands ; that is, either by the enacting and executing of penal laws upon them, or by the holy example which they continually set before them. By their eyes ; that is, by continually observing and watching their behaviour ; when many eyes are upon men, they must do something to satisfy the expectations of others, and purchase a reputation to themselves. It may be said, that sometimes God doth lay an external force upon men ; as particularly by his severe judgments, or threatenings of judgments, awakening them, humbling them, and constraining them to some kind of worship and religion. Such a forced devotion as this was the humiliation of Ahab, and the supplication of Saul. For God himself acting upon men, only from without them, is far from producing a living principle of free and noble religion in the soul.

Now, the better to discern this forced and violent religion, I will briefly describe it by three or four of its properties, with which I will shut up this point.

1. This forced religion is, for the most part, dry and spiritless. I know, indeed, that fancy may be screwed up to a high pitch of joy and transport, so as to raise the mind into a kind of rapture, as I have formerly hinted in my discourse upon these words. A mere artificial and counterfeit Christian may be so strongly acted on by imagination, and the power of self-love, that he may seem to himself to be fuller of God than the sober and constant soul. You may see how the hypocritical Pharisees, swol-

len with self-conceit, gloried over the poor man that had been blind, but now saw more than all they : “Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us?”—and indeed over the whole people, “This people that knoweth not the law is cursed.” A counterfeit Christian may rise high as a meteor, and blaze much as a comet, which is yet drawn up by mere force from the surface of the earth or water. And as to the external and visible acts and duties of religion, which depend much upon the temper and constitution of the body, it may easily be conceived and accounted for, how the mimical and mechanical Christian may rise higher in these, and be more zealous, watchful, and cheerful, than many truly religious and sincere men, as having greater power of quickness and fancy, and a greater portion of animal spirits ; upon which the motions and actions of the body do mainly depend. The animal spirits may so nimbly serve the soul in these corporal acts, that the whole transaction may be a fair imitation of the motions of the divine Spirit, and one would verily think there were a gracious principle in the soul itself. This seems to be notably exemplified in Captain Jehu, whose religious actions, as he would fain have them be esteemed, were indeed rather fury than zeal, and proceeded more from his own fiery spirits, than from that spirit of fire, or spirit of burning, which is of God. But commonly this forced devotion is jejune and dry, void of zeal and warmth, and drives on heavily in pursuit of the God

of Israel, as Pharaoh did in pursuit of the Israel of God, when his chariot-wheels were taken off. God's drawing the soul from within, as a principle, doth indeed cause that soul to run after him, but you know the motion of those things that are drawn by external force is commonly heavy, slow, and languid.

2. This forced religion is penurious and needy. Something the slavish-spirited Christian must do to appease an angry God, or to allay a storming conscience, as I hinted before; but it shall be as little as may be. He is ready to grudge God so much of his time and strength, and to find fault that Sabbaths come so thick, and last so long, and that duties are to be performed so often: so he is described by the Prophet, "When will the Sabbath be past, and the new moon gone?" But yet I will not deny, but that this kind of religion may be very liberal and expensive too, and run out much into the branches of external duties, as is the manner of many trees that bear no fruit; for so did the base spirit of the Pharisees, whose often fasting, and long praying, is recorded by our Saviour in the gospel, but not with approbation. Therefore these are not the things by which you must take measure, and make estimate of your religion. But in the great things of the law, in the grand duties of mortification, self-denial, and resignation; here this forced religion is always very stingy and penurious. In the duties that do nearly touch upon their beloved lusts, they will be as strict with God as may

be, they will break with him for a small matter : God must have no more than his due, as they blasphemously phrase it in their hearts ; with the slothful servant in the gospel, “Lo, there thou hast that is thine ;” self and the world sure may be allowed the rest. They will not part with all for Christ. Is it not a little one ? let me escape thither, and take up my abode there, said Lot. They will not give up themselves entirely unto God ; “the Lord pardon me in this one thing,” cries Naaman ; so they, in this or that, let God hold me excused. The slavish-spirited Christian is never more shrunk up within himself, than when he is to converse with God indeed : but the pious soul is never freer, larger, gladder, than when he doth most intimately and familiarly converse with God. The soul that is free as to liberty, is free also as to liberality and expenses ; and that not only in external, but internal and spiritual obedience, and compliance with the will of God ; he gives himself wholly up to God, knows no interest of his own, keeps no reserve for himself, or for the creature.

3. This forced religion is uneven, as depending upon inconstant causes. As land-floods, that have no spring within themselves, vary their motions, are swift and slow, high and low, according as they are supplied with rain ; even so these men’s motions in religion, depending upon fancy for the most part, than which nothing is more fickle and flitting, have no constancy nor consistency in them.

I know indeed, that the spirits of the best men cannot always keep one pace, nor their lives be always of one piece; but yet they are never willingly quite out of the call or compass of religion. But this I also touched upon formerly. Therefore,

4. This forced religion is not permanent. The meteors will down again, and be choked in the earth whence they arose. Take away the weight, and the motion ceases; take away Jehoiada, and Joash stands still, yea, runs backward. But this I shall speak more to, when I come to speak of the last property of religion, namely, its perseverance.

CHAP. IV.

The active and vigorous nature of true religion proved by many scriptural phrases of the most powerful importance—more particularly explained in three things—1. In the soul's continual care and study to be good—2. In its care to do good—3. In its powerful and incessant longings after the most full enjoyment of God.

I COME now to the second property of true religion, which is to be found in this phrase, “springing up,” or leaping up; wherein the activity and vigorousness of it is described. Religion, though it be compared to water, yet is no standing pool of water, but “a well of water springing up.” And here the proposition that I shall establish, is, “That true religion is active and vigorous.” It is no lazy and languid thing, but full of life and power: so I find it every where described in scripture, by things that are most active, lively, vigorous, operative, spreading, powerful, and sometimes even by motion itself. As sin is, in scripture, described by death and darkness, which are a cessation and privation of life, and light, and motion: so religion is described by life, which is active and vigorous; by an angelical life, which is spiritual and powerful; yea, a divine life, which is, as I may say, most lively and vivacious. “Christ liveth in me,” and the production of

this new nature in the soul is called a quickening, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;" and the reception of it, a "passing from death unto life." Again, as sin and wickedness are described by flesh, which is sluggish and inactive, so this holy principle in the soul is called spirit, "The spirit lusteth against the flesh;" yea, the "spirit of power," and the "spirit of life,"—"The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." How can the power and activity of any principle be more commended, than by saying it is life, and the "spirit of life," and "the law of the spirit of life" in the soul? which hath made me sometimes to apply those words of the Prophet, as a description of every pious soul, "I am full of power and might by the Spirit of the Lord."

Yea, further, the holy Apostle seems to describe a godly principle in the soul by activity and motion itself, Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14; where he gives this excellent character of himself, and this lively description of his religious disposition, as if it were nothing else but activity and fervour; I follow after, that I may apprehend; I forget those things that are behind, and reach forth unto those things that are before; I press towards the mark, &c. It were too much to comment upon those phrases of like importance, "labouring, seeking, striving, fighting, running, wrestling, panting, longing, hungering, thirsting, watching," and many others, which the

Holy Ghost makes use of in the scriptures, to express the active, industrious, vigorous, diligent, and powerful nature of this divine principle, which God hath put into the souls of his people. The streams of divine grace, which flow forth from the throne of God, and of the Lamb, into the souls of men, do not cleanse them; and so pass away, like some violent land-flood, that washes the fields and meadows, and so leaves them to contract as much filth as ever; but the same becomes a “well of water,” continually springing up, boiling, and bubbling, and working in the soul, and sending out fresh rivers, as our Saviour calls them—“Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

But, more particularly to unfold the active nature of this divine principle in the soul, we shall consider it in these three particulars, namely, as it is still conforming to God, doing for him, and longing after him.

1. The active and sprightly nature of true godliness, or religion planted by God in the soul, shows itself in a continued care and study to be good, to conform more and more to the nature of the blessed God, the glorious pattern of all perfection. The nature of God being infinitely and absolutely perfect, is the only rule of perfection to the creature. If we speak of goodness, our Saviour tells us, that God alone is good; of wisdom, the Apostle tells us, that God is only wise; of power, he is omnipotent; of mercy and kindness, he is

love itself. Men are only good by way of participation from God, and in a way of assimilation to him: so that, though good men may be imitated, and followed, yet it must be with this limitation, as far as they are followers of God: the great Apostle durst not press his example any further—"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." But the nature of God being infinitely and absolutely perfect, is to be eyed and imitated singly, entirely, universally, in all things wherein the creature is capable of following him, and becoming like unto him. So Christians are required to look up unto the Father of lights, the fountain of all perfections, and to take from him the pattern of their dispositions, and conversation, and to eye him, continually, and eyeing him, to derive an image of him, not into their eye, as we do by sensible objects, but into their souls, to polish and frame them into the most clear and lively resemblances of him; that is, in the language of scripture, to be "perfect, as their heavenly Father is perfect," to be "holy as God is holy." And thus the genuine children of God are described by the Holy Ghost, they are "followers of God." This is the shortest, but the surest and clearest mark that can be given of a good man, "a follower of God." They are not owned for the children of God, who are created by him, nor they who have a notional knowledge of him, who profess him, or exhibit some external worship and service to him in the world, but

they that imitate him: the true children of Abraham were not those that were descended from him, or boasted of him, but they that did the works of Abraham, John viii. 39; even so are they only the offspring of heaven, the true and dear children of the living God, who are followers of him; “be ye followers of God as dear children.” A pious soul having its eyes opened, to behold the infinite beauty, purity, and perfection, of that good God, whose nature is the very fountain, and must, therefore, be the rule of all goodness, presently comes to undervalue all created excellencies, both in itself, and all the world besides, as to any satisfaction that is to be had in them, or any perfection that can be acquired by them, and cannot endure to take up with any lower good, or live by any lower rule than God himself. A pious man, having the unclean and rebellious spirit cast out, and being once reconciled to the nature of God, is daily labouring to be more intimately united thereunto, and to be all that God is, as far as he is capable,—the nature of God being infinitely more pure and perfect, and more desirable than his own. Religion is a participation of life from him, who is life itself, and so must needs be an active principle, spreading itself in the soul, and causing the soul to spread itself in God: and, therefore, the kingdom of heaven, which, in many places of the gospel, I take to be nothing else but this divine principle in the soul, which is both the truest heaven, and most properly a kingdom (for thereby

God doth most powerfully reign and exercise his sovereignty, and most excellently display and manifest his glory in the world) is compared to "seed sown in good ground," which both springeth up into a blade, and bringeth forth fruit; to mustard-seed, which spreadeth itself, and groweth great, so that the birds of the air may lodge in the branches thereof; to leaven, spreading itself through the whole quantity of meal, and leavening the whole, and all the parts of it. By a like similitude, the path of the just is compared to a shining light, whose glory and lustre increaseth continually, "shining more and more unto the perfect day;" which continual growing up of the holy soul into God, is excellently described by the Apostle, in an elegant metaphor, "We all, with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory;" that is, from one resemblance of divine glory to another. The gracious soul not being contented with its present attainments, and having in its eye a perfect and absolute good, forgets that which is behind, and labours, prays, strives, and studies, to get the perfections of God more clearly copied out upon itself, and itself, as much as may be, swallowed up in the divinity. It covets earnestly these best things, to be perfected in grace and holiness, to have divine characters more fair and legible, divine impressions more deep and lively, divine life more strong and powerful, and the communicable image of the blessed

God spread quite over it, and through it. A pious soul is not content to receive of Christ's fulness, but labours to be filled with the fulness, with all the fulness of God; he rejoices indeed that he hath received of Christ grace for grace, as a child hath limb for limb with his father; but this his joy is not fulfilled, except he find himself adding daily some cubits to his infant-stature; nor indeed then either, nor can it be, until he come to the measure of the stature of his Lord, and be grown up unto him in all things who is the head, even Christ. He delights and glories in God, beholding his spices growing in his soul; but that does not satisfy him, except he may see them flowing out also. He is neither barren nor unfruitful, as the Apostle Peter speaks; but that is not enough, he desires to be fat and fruitful also, as a watered garden, as the Prophet expresseth it, even as the garden of God. The spirit lusteth against the flesh, and struggles with it in the same womb of the soul, as Jacob with Esau, until he had cast him out. The seed of God warreth continually against the seed of the serpent, raging and restless, like Jehu, shooting, and stabbing, and strangling all he meets with, till none at all remain of the family of that Ahab who had formerly been his master. O how does the pious and devout soul long to have Christ's victory carried on in itself, to have Christ going on in him conquering and to conquer, till at length the very last enemy be subdued, that the Prince of Peace

may ride triumphantly through all the coasts and regions of his heart and life, and not so much as a dog move his tongue against him ! This holy principle which is of God in the soul, is actually industrious too ; it doth not fold the arms together, hide its hand in its bosom, faintly wishing to obtain a final conquest over its enemies, but advances itself with a noble stoutness against lusts and passions, even as the sun glorieth against the darkness of the night, until it have chased it all away. The pious soul puts itself under the banner of Christ, fights under the conduct of the angel of God's presence, and so marches up undauntedly against the children of Anak, those earthly loves, lusts, sensual affections, which are indeed taller and stronger than all other enemies that encounter it in this wilderness state : and the gracious God is not wanting to such endeavours, he "remembering his promise, helpeth his servant," even that promise, that "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." A true Israelitish soul, impregnated with this noble and heroic principle, is not like those slothful Israelites, that were content with what they had got of the holy land, and either could not, or cared not to enlarge their border. But he makes war upon the remainder of the Canaanites, and is never at rest until he have, with Sarah, cast out the bond-woman and her son too. You may see an emblem of such a soul in Moses holding up his hands all the day long, till Amalek was quite discomfited ;

Exod. xvii. 12. As often as the floods of temptation, springing from the devil, the world, or the flesh, do offer to come in upon him, he opposeth them in the strength of Christ; or, if you will, in the Prophet's phrase, "The Spirit of the Lord lifteth up a standard against them;" so that he is not carried down by them, or, at least, not overwhelmed with them. In the beginning of my discourse upon this head, I hinted to you the reason why the pious soul continually studies conformity to God, even because he is the perfect and absolute Good, and the soul reckons that its happiness consists only in being like unto him, in partaking of a divine nature. But I might also here take occasion to speak of three things, which I will but briefly name, and so pass on.

(1.) A godly man reckons with himself, that conformity to the image and nature of God, is the most proper conversing with God in the world. The great, and indeed only employment of an immortal soul, is to converse with its Creator; for this end it was made, and made so capacious as we see it: now, to partake of a divine nature, to be endued with a God-like disposition, is most properly to converse with God; this is a real, powerful, practical, and feeling converse with him, infinitely to be preferred before all notions, professions, performances, or speculations.

(2.) A godly man reckons that the image of God is the glory and ornament of the soul; it is the

lustre, and brightness, and beauty of the soul, as the soul is of the body. Holiness is not only the duty, but the highest honour and dignity that any created nature is capable of: and therefore the pious soul, who hath his senses exercised to discern good and evil, pursues after it, as after his full and proper perfection.

(3.) A godly man reckons, that conformity to the divine image, participation of a divine nature, is the surest and most comfortable evidence of divine love, which is a matter of so great inquiry in the world. By growing up daily in Christ Jesus, we are infallibly assured of our implantation into him. The Spirit of God descending upon the soul in the impressions of meekness, kindness, uprightness, which is a dove-like disposition, is a better, and more desirable evidence of our sonship, and God's favour towards us, than if we had the Spirit descending upon our heads in a dove-like shape, as it did upon our blessed Saviour. These are the reasons, why the sincere Christian, above all things, labours to become God-like, to be formed more and more into a resemblance of the Supreme Good, and to drink in divine perfection into the very inmost of his soul.

2. The active and industrious nature of true godliness, or religion, manifests itself in a good man's continual care, and study to do good, to serve the interest of the holy and blessed God in the world. A good man being mastered with the sense of the

infinite goodness of God, and the great end of his life, cannot think it worth while to spend himself for any inferior good, or bestow his time and strength for any lower end than that is; and therefore, as it is the main happiness of his life to enjoy God, so he makes it the main business of his life to serve him, to be doing for him, to lay out himself for him, and to display, and propagate his glory in the world. And, as he is filled with apprehensions of the Supreme Goodness, which doth infinitely deserve, and may justly challenge, all that he can do or expend for him, so he doth indeed really partake of the active and communicative nature of that blessed Being, and himself becomes active and communicative too: a pious soul, sluggish and inactive, is as if one should say, a pious soul altogether unlike to God; a pure contradiction. I cannot dwell upon any of those particular designs of serving the interest of God's glory, which a good man is still driving on in the world: only this, in general, whether he pray, or preach, or read, or celebrate Sabbaths, or administer private reproof or instruction, or indeed plough or sow, eat or drink, all this while he lives not to himself, but serves a higher interest than that of the flesh, and a higher good than himself, or any created being. A true christian activity doth not only appear in those things which we call duties of worship, or religious performances; but in the whole frame of the heart contriving, and the conversation expressing and unfolding the glory

of God. A holy, serious, heavenly, humble, sober, righteous, and self-denying course of life, does most excellently express the divine glory, by imitating the nature of God, and most effectually calls all men to the imitation of it; according as our Saviour hath nakedly stated the case, “Hereby is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit:” by which fruits are not to be understood only preaching, praying, conference, which are indeed high and excellent duties; but also righteousness, temperance, self-denial, which things are pure reflections of the divine image, and a real glorifying of God’s name and perfections. A good Christian cannot be content to be happy alone, to be still drawing down heaven into his own soul; but he endeavours also by prayer, counsel, and holy example, to draw up the souls of other men heaven-ward. This God witnesseth of Abraham, “I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord. And this Moses doth excellently witness of himself in that holy rapture of his, “Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them;” By such examples as these a good man desires to live, yea, by higher precedents than either Abraham or Moses, even by the example of the Father and of the Son: he admires and strives to imitate that character which is given of God himself, “Thou art good, and dost good:” and that which is given of Christ

Jesus, the Lord of life, who “went about doing good :” who also witnessed elsewhere concerning himself, that he came not into the world to do his own will, nor seek his own glory, but the will and glory of him that sent him : and again, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business ?” O how happy would the pious soul count itself, if it could but live and converse in the world, in the same manner, and with the same devout, fervent, exalted spirit, as Christ Jesus did, whose meat and drink it was still to be doing the will, and advancing the glory of his Father ! But, alas ! the poor soul finds itself ensnared by passions, and selfish affections from within, clogged with an unwieldy body, and distracted with secular affairs from without, that it cannot rise so nimbly, run so swiftly, nor serve the infinite and glorious God so cheerfully, nor liberally, as it would ; and therefore the poor prisoner sighs within itself, and wishes that it might escape : but finding a certain time determined upon it in the body, which it must be content to live out, it looks up, and is ready to envy the angels of God, because it cannot live as they do, who are always upon God’s errand, and almost thinks much that itself is not a ministering spirit, serving the pure and perfect will of the Supreme Good, without grudging or ceasing. The pious soul, under these powerful apprehensions of the nature of God, the example of Christ, and the honourable office of the holy angels, is ready to grudge

the body that attendance that it calls for, and those offices which it is forced to perform to it; as judging them impertinent to its main happiness, and most excellent employment; it is ready to envy that more cheerful and willing service, which it finds from the heavy and drossy body with which it is united; and to cry out, O that I were that to my God, which my body, my eyes, hands, and feet, are to me! for I say to one of these, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Do this, and he doth it. In a word, a good man being acquainted feelingly with the highest Good, eyeing diligently the great end of his coming into the world, and his short time of being in it, serves the eternal and blessed God, lives upon eternal designs, and by consecrating all his actions unto God, gives a kind of immortality to them, which are in themselves flitting and transient: he counts it a reproach to any man, much more to a good man, to do anything insignificantly, much more to live impertinently; and he reckons all things that have not a tendency to the highest Good, and a subserviency to the great and last end, to be impertinencies, yea, and absurdities in an immortal soul, which should continually be “springing up into everlasting life.”

3. The active and vigorous nature of true religion manifests itself in those powerful and incessant longings after God, with which it fills that soul in which it is planted. This I superadd to the two former, because the religious man, though he be

formed into some likeness to God, yet desires to be more like him; and though he be somewhat serviceable to him, yet desires to be more instrumental in doing his will: though he be good, yet he desires to be better; and though he do good, yet he desires to do better, or at least more. And, indeed, I reckon that these sincere and holy hungerings after God, which I am going to speak of, are one of the best signs that I know in the world of spiritual health, and the best criterion of a true Christian: for, in this low and animal state, we are better acquainted with lovings and languishings, than with fruition or satisfaction; and the best enjoyment that we have of God in this world is but scant and short, indeed but a kind of longing to enjoy him. Love is certainly a high and noble affection; but, alas! our love, whilst we are here in the body, is in its non-age, in its weak and sickly state, rather a longing than a loving, much unlike to what it will be when it shall be grown up unto its perfect stature in glory. But this sickly kind of languishing affection is a certain symptom of a healthful constitution; or as the Apostle calls it, of “the spirit of a sound mind.” Pious souls are thirsty souls, always gasping after the living springs of divine grace, even as the parched desert gapeth for the dew of heaven, the early and the latter rain. One would wonder what kind of magic there was in Elijah’s mantle, that the very casting of it upon Elisha should make him leave oxen and plough,

yea, father and mother, and all, to run after a stranger: Elijah himself seems to wonder at it, "What have I done to thee?" O but what a mighty charm is there in divine love! which when it is once shed abroad in the soul, makes the soul to spread itself in it and to it, as the sun-flower attending the motions of the sun, and turning itself every way towards it, welcoming its warm and refreshing beams. Elijah passing by Elisha as he was at plough, and catching him with his mantle, is but a scant resemblance of the blessed God passing by a carnal mind, and wrapping it in the mantle of his love, and thereby causing it to run, yea, to fly swiftly after him. If divine grace do but once touch the soul, the soul presently adheres to it, as the needle to the loadstone. They that heard Christ Jesus chiding the winds and the waves, cried out, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" but if one had been present when he called James and John from their nets, Matthew from the custom-house, and Zaccheus from the tree, and by calling made them willing to come, he surely would have cried out, What manner of God is this! that, by his bare word makes poor men leave their trades and livelihood, and rich men their gainful exactions, usuries, oppressions, to follow him, and shows them no reasons why. What a mighty virtue is there in the ointment of Christ's name, that as soon as it is poured out, the virgins fall in love with him? Micah cried out when he was in pur-

suit of his gods, and should they ask him what ailed him? And will ye wonder that a holy soul, in pursuit of the holy God, should be in earnest; that he should run, and cry as he runs? as I have seen a fond child whom the father or mother have endeavoured to leave behind them. God breathing into the soul, makes the soul breathe after him, and in a mixture of holy disdain and anger, to thrust away from itself all distracting companions, occasions, and concerns, saying with Ephraim to her idols, "Get ye hence." The soul thus inspired is so far from prostituting itself to any earthly, sensual, selfish lusts, and loves, that it cannot brook anything that would weaken it in the prosecution of the highest good; it is impatient of every thing that would either stop or slacken its motions after God. The pious man desires still to be doing something for God indeed; but if the case so fall out, that he cannot spend his life for God as he desires, yet he will be spending his soul upon him: though he cannot perpetually abide upon the knee of prayer, yet he would be continually upon the wing of faith and love: when his tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth, that he cannot speak for God, yet his soul will cleave unto him, and complain because it can speak no longer; for faith and love are knitting graces, and do long to make the soul as much one with their object, as is possible for the creature to be with its Creator. Religion puts a restless appetite into the soul after a higher Good,

and makes it throw itself into his arms, and wind itself into his embraces, longing to be in a more intimate conjunction with him, or rather entirely wrapped up in him; itself is an insatiable and covetous principle in the soul, much like to the daughter of the horseleech, crying continually, "Give, give." What the Prophet speaks rhetorically of hell, is also true concerning this offspring of heaven in the soul, "it enlargeth itself, and openeth its mouth without measure." The spirit of true godliness seems to be altogether such that it cannot rest in any measure of grace, or be fully contented with any of its attainments in this life; but ardently longs to receive the more plentiful communications of love, the more deep and legible impressions of grace, the more clear and ample experiences of divine assistance, the more sensible evidences of divine favour, the more powerful and transporting illapses and incomes of divine consolation into itself; "let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." Such is the spirit of true godliness, that the weakest that is endued with it, longs to be as David, and the Davids to be as God, as the angel of the Lord, according to that promise, "In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them." The pious soul, that is in his right senses, under the powerful apprehensions of the loveliness

of God, and the beauty of holiness, cannot be content to live by any lower instance than that of David, whose soul even broke for the longing that it had unto the Lord, or that of the spouse, who was even sick of love. You have read of the mother of Sisera looking out at the window, waiting for his coming, and crying through the lattice, "Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot?" But this is not to be compared to the earnest expectation of the creature, the new creature, waiting for the manifestation of God; which the Apostle elegantly expresseth, and yet seems to labour for words, as if he could not sufficiently express it either, Rom. viii. 19. You have read of the Israelites marching up towards the promised land, and murmuring that they were held so long in the wilderness; but the true Israelitish soul makes more haste with less discontent, marches as under the conduct of the angel of God's presence, and longs to arrive at its rest: but, alas! it is held in the wilderness too; and therefore cannot be fully quiet in itself, but sends forth spies to view the land, the scouts of faith and hope, like Caleb and Joshua, those men of another spirit; and these go and walk through the holy land, and return home to the soul, and come back, not as Noah's dove with an olive leaf in her mouth, but with some clusters in their hands they bring the soul a taste of the good things of the kingdom, of the glories of her eternal state: yea, the soul itself marches up

to possess the land, goes out, with the Church in the Canticles, to meet the Lord, to seek him whom her soul loveth. Religion is a sacred fire kept burning in the temple of the soul continually, which being once kindled from heaven, never goes out, but burns up heaven-wards, as the nature of fire is: this fire is kept alive in the soul to all eternity, though sometimes, through the ashes of earthly cares and concerns cast into it, or the sun of earthly prosperity shining upon it, it may sometimes burn more dimly, and seem almost as if it were quite smothered: this fire is for sacrifice too, though sacrifice be not always offered upon it; the same fire of faith and love which offered up the morning sacrifice is kept alive all the day long, and is ready to kindle the evening sacrifice too, when the appointed time of it shall come. In this chariot of fire it is that the soul is continually carried out towards God, and accomplisheth a kind of glorification daily; and when it finds itself firmly seated and swiftly carried herein, it no longer envies the translation of Elijah. The spirit of sanctification is in the soul as a burning fire shut up in the bones, which makes the soul weary with forbearing, and so powerful in longings that it cannot stay; as the spirit of prophecy is described, Jer. xx. It is more true of the Spirit of God than of the spirit of Elihu, the spirit within constraineth, and even presseth the soul, so that it is ready to swoon and faint away for very vehemence of longing. See the delighted spouse

falling into one of these fainting fits, and crying out mainly for some cordial from heaven to keep up her sinking spirits, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love." O beautiful and blessed sight, a soul working towards God, panting, and longing, and labouring after its proper happiness and perfection! Well, the sinking soul is relieved; Christ Jesus reacheth forth his left hand to her head, and his right hand embraceth her; and now she recovers, her hanging hands lift up themselves, and the beauties of her fading complexion are restored; now she sits down "under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet unto her taste." See here the fairest sight on this side heaven; a soul resting, and glorying, and spreading itself in the arms of God, growing up in him, growing great in him, growing full in his fulness, and perfectly transported with his pure love! O my soul, be not content to live by any lower instance? "Did not our hearts burn within us," said the two disciples one to the other, "whilst he talked with us?" But the soul in which the sacred fire of love is powerfully kindled, doth not only burn towards God, whilst he is more familiarly present with it, and, as it were, blows upon it; but if he seem to withdraw from it, it burns after him still; "My beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone; I sought him; I called him." And if the fire begin to languish, and seem as if it would go out, the holy soul is startled presently, and labours, as the Apostle speaks, to

revive it, and blow it up again, calls upon itself to awake, to arise and pursue, to mend its pace, and to speed its heavy and sluggish motions. This divine active principle in the soul maintains a continual striving, a holy struggling and stretching forth of the soul towards God, a bold and ardent contention after the Supreme Good ; religion hath the strength of the divinity in it, its motions towards its object are quick and potent. That elegant description which the Prophet makes of the wicked heart, with some change, may be brought to express this excellent temper of the pious soul ; it is like the working sea which cannot rest : and although its waters do not cast up mire and dirt, yet in a holy impatience, they rise and swell, and cast themselves up high towards heaven. In a word, that I may comprize many things in few expressions, no man so ambitious as the humble, none so covetous as the heavenly-minded, none so voluptuous as the self-denying : religion gives a largeness and wideness to the soul, which sin, and self, and the world, had straitened and confined ; but his ambition is only to be great in God, his covetousness is only to be filled with all the fulness of God, and his voluptuousness is only to drink of the rivers of his pure pleasures : he desires to enjoy the God whom he sees, and to be satisfied with the God whom he loves. O now, how are all the faculties of the soul awakened to attendance upon the Lord of life ! It hearkens for the sound of his feet com-

ing, the noise of his hands knocking at the door ; it stands upon its watch-tower waiting for his appearing, waiting more earnestly than they that watch for the morning, and rejoices to meet him at his coming ; and having met him, runs into his arms, embraces him, holds him, and will not let him go, but brings him into the house, and entertains him in the guest-chamber : the soul complains that itself is not large enough, that there is not room enough to entertain so glorious a guest, no, not though it have given him all the room that it hath : it receives him with the widest arms, and the sweetest smiles ; and if he depart and withdraw, fetches him again with the deepest sighs, Return, return, O Prince of Peace, and make me an everlasting habitation of righteousness unto thyself !

It will not be amiss here briefly to touch upon the reason of the pious soul's so ardent pantings after God. And here I might show first, negatively, that it springs not from any carnal ambition of being better and higher than others, not from any carnal hope of impunity and safety, nor merely from the bitter sense of pressing and tormenting afflictions in this life. But I shall rather insist upon it affirmatively. These earnest breathings after God spring from the feeling apprehensions of self-indigency and insufficiency, and the powerful sense of divine goodness and fulness ; they are produced by the divine bounty and self-sufficiency, manifesting itself to the spirits of men, and con-

ceived and brought forth by a deep sense of self-poverty; one might almost apply the Apostle's words to this purpose, "We receive the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in him." I shall not discourse upon these two heads disjointly, but frame them into one idea, and so you may take it thus; these holy longings of the pious soul after God, do arise from the sense of its distance from God. To be so far distant from God who is life and love itself, and the proper and full happiness of the soul, is grievous to the soul that is rightly affected towards him: and hence it is that the soul cannot be at rest, but still longs to be more intimately joined to him, and more perfectly filled with him: and the clearer the soul's apprehensions are of its object, and the deeper its sense is of its own unlikeness to him, and distance from him, the more strong and impatient are its breathings; insomuch that not only fear, as the Apostle speaks, but even love itself sometimes seems to itself to have a kind of agony and torment in itself; which made the Church cry she was sick of love, that is, sick of every thing that kept her from her love, sick of that distance at which she stood from her beloved Lord. The pious soul being delighted with the infinite sweetness and goodness of God, longs to be that rather than what itself is, and beholding how it is estranged from him, by many sensual loves, selfish passions, corporeal clogs, and distractions, bewails its distance, and cries out

within itself, "O when shall I come and appear before God!" O when will God come and appear gloriously to me and in me! "Who will deliver me from this body of death!" O that mortality were swallowed up of life! David's soul waited for God as earnestly, and more properly than they that watch for the morning; they may be said rather to be weary of the long, and cold, and troublesome night, than properly covetous of the day; but he, out of a pure and spiritual sense of his estrangement from God, longs to appear before him, and be wrapped up in him. Heal the godly man of all his afflictions, grievances, and adversities in the world, that he may have nothing to trouble him, nor put him to pain, yet he is not quiet, he is in pain because of the distance at which he stands from God: give him the whole world, and all the glory of it, yet he has not enough; he still cries, and craves, Give, give; because he is not entirely swallowed up in God: he openeth his mouth wide, as the Psalmist speaks, and all the silver, and gold, peace, health, liberty, preferment, that you impart to it, cannot fill it; because they are not God, he cannot look upon them as his chief good. In a word, a pious man doth not so much say, in the sense either of sin or affliction, "O that one would give me the wings of a dove, that I might fly away, and be at rest!" as in the sense of his dissimilitude to, and distance from God, O that one would give me the wings of an angel, that I might fly away towards heaven!

CHAP. IV.

An expostulation with Christians concerning their remiss and sluggish temper—an attempt to convince them of it by some considerations—which are—1. The activity of worldly men—2. The restless appetites of the body—3. The strong propensions of every creature towards its own centre—An inquiry into the slothfulness and inactivity of christian souls—The grace of faith vindicated from the slander of being merely passive—A short attempt to awaken Christians unto greater vigour and activity.

WE have seen in what respects religion is an active principle in the soul where it is seated: give me leave to enlarge a little here for conviction or reprehension. By this property of true religion we shall be able to discover much that is false and counterfeit in the world. If religion be no lazy, languid, sluggish, passive thing, but life, love, the spirit of power and freedom, a fire burning, a well of water springing up, as we have sufficiently seen, what shall we say then of that heavy, sluggish, spiritless kind of religion that most men take up with? Shall we call it a spirit of life, with the Apostle; and yet allow of a religion that is cold and dead? Shall we call it a spirit of love and power with the Apostle; and yet allow of it, though it be indifferent, low, and impotent? Or will such pass for current with the wise and holy God, if we should

pass a favourable censure upon it? And why should it ever pass with men, if it will not for ever pass with God? But, indeed, how can this inactivity and sluggishness pass for religion amongst men? Who can think you are in pursuit of the infinite and Supreme Good, that sees you so slow in your motions towards it? Who can think that your treasure is in heaven, that sees your heart so far from thence? The more anything partakes of God, and the nearer it comes to him who is the fountain of life, and power, and virtue, the more active, powerful, and lively will it be. We read of an atheistical generation in Zeph. i. 12, who fancied to themselves an idle and slothful God, that minded not the affairs of the world at all, saying, "The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil;" which was also the false and gross conceit of many of the heathen, as Cicero confesses of some of the philosophers themselves, "who maintain that God has no power in himself, and can impart no power to any other:" and, indeed, though it be not so blasphemous, yet it is almost as absurd, to fancy an idle saint, as an idle deity. Sure I am, if it be not altogether impossible, yet it is altogether a shameful and deformed sight, a holy soul in a lethargy, a pious soul that is not in pursuit of God. Moses indeed bids Israel "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord;" but there is no such divinity in the holy scriptures as this, 'stand still and see the salvation of the soul,' though some have violently

pressed those words, *Exod. xiv. 13*, to serve under their slothful standard: no, no, the scripture speaks to us in another manner, “work out your own salvation:” and indeed the Spirit of God doth every where describe religion by the activity, industry, vigour, and quietness of it, as I hinted in the very beginning of this discourse, and could abundantly confirm and explain, if there were need of it.

But that I may more powerfully convince and awaken the lazy and heavy spirit and temper of many professors, I will briefly touch upon a few particulars, which I will next propound to their serious consideration.

1. The children of this world, earthly and sensual men, are not so slothful, so lazy, so indifferent in the pursuit of earthly and sensual objects. You say you have laid up your treasure in heaven; we know they have laid up their treasure in the earth: now, who is it that behaves himself most suitably and seemly towards his treasure? you or they? You say you have a treasure in heaven, and are content to be able to say so, but make no haste to be fully and feelingly possessed of it, to enjoy the benefit and sweetness of it. But they “rise up early and sit up late,” and either pine themselves, or eat the bread of sorrow, to obtain earthly and perishing inheritances; they compass the world, travel far, sell all to purchase that part which is of so great price with them: and when they have accomplished it, O how do they set their heart upon

it, bind up their very souls in the same bags with their money, and seal up their affections together with it: yea, and they are not at rest either, but find a gnawing hunger upon their hearts after more still, to add house to house, and land to land, and one bag to another: the covetous miser is ready to sit down and wring his hands, because he hath no more hands to scrape with; the voluptuous Epicure is angry that he hath not the neck of a crane the better to taste his dainties; and ambitious Alexander, when he domineers over the known world, is ready to sit down and whine, because there are no more worlds to conquer. What Christian but must be ashamed of himself, when he reads the description which Plautus the comedian gives of a covetous worldling, under the person of Euclio, how he hid his pot of gold, heeded it, watched it, visited it almost every hour, would not go from it in the day, could not sleep for it in the night, suspected every body that so much as looked towards it, and by all means kept it even as his life? For where is the like eager and ardent disposition to be found in a Christian towards God himself? Tell me, is it possible for a man that vehemently loves a virgin, to be content all his life long to court her at a distance, and not care whether ever he eventually marry her or not? Or must not such a one necessarily pursue a matrimonial and most intimate union with her? Let us now confess the truth, and every one judge himself.

2. This dull and earthly body, is not so indifferently affected towards meat and drink, and rest, and the things that serve its necessities, and gratify its temper. Hunger will break down stone walls, and thirst will give away a kingdom for a cup of water; sickness will not be eased by good words, nor will a drowsy brain be bribed by any entertainments of company or recreation: no, no, the necessities of the body must and will be relieved with food, and physic, and sleep; the restless and raging appetite will never cease calling and crying to the soul for supplies till it arise and give them. Behold, O my soul! consider the mighty and incessant appetites and tendencies of the body after sensual objects, after its suitable good and proper perfection, and be ashamed of thy more remiss and sluggish inclinations towards the highest good, a God-like perfection.

3. No creature in the whole world is so languid, slow, and indifferent in its motions towards its proper rest and centre. How easy were it to call heaven and earth to witness the free, pleasant, cheerful, eager progress of every creature according to its kind, towards its own centre and happiness? The sun in the firmament rejoices to run its race, and will not stand still one moment, except it be miraculously overpowered by the command of God himself; the rivers seem to be in pain, till by a continued flowing they have accomplished to themselves a kind of perfection, and be swallowed up in

the bosom of the ocean, except they be benumbed with frost, or otherwise over-mastered and retarded by foreign violence; I need not instance in sensitive and vegetating things; all which you know with a natural vigour and activity grow up daily towards a perfect state and stature. Were it not a strange and monstrous sight to see a stone settling in the air, and not working towards its centre? Such a spectacle is a pious soul settling upon earth, and not endeavouring a nearer and more intimate union with its God. Wherefore, Christians, either cease to pretend that you have chosen God for your portion, centre, happiness, or else arise and cease not to pursue and accomplish the closest union and the most familiar conjunction with him that your souls are capable of: otherwise I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day: and the day is coming, when you will be put to shame by the whole creation. Doth every, even the meanest creature of God, pursue its end and perfection, and proper happiness, with ardent and vehement longings; and shall a soul, the noblest of all creatures, stand folding up itself in itself, or choking up its wide and divine capacity with dust and mire? Shall a pious soul, the noblest of all souls, hang the wing, suspend its motions towards the Supreme Good, or so much as once offer to faint and languish in its enterprises for eternal life? Tell it not at Athens, publish it not at Rome, lest the heathen philosophers deride and hiss us out of the world.

But you will ask me, When a Christian may be said to be sluggish and inactive? and who these lazy souls are? I will premise two things, and then give you a brief account of them. (1.) When I speak of a sluggish and spiritless religion, I do not speak as the hot-spirited Anabaptists or Chiliasts, who being themselves acted by a strange fervour of mind, miscalled zeal, are wont to declaim against all men as cold and benumbed in their spirits, who do not call for fire from heaven to consume all Dissenters, under the notion of Antichristian; who are not afraid to reproach the divine, holy, gentle, yet generous spirit of religion; calling it weak, womanish, cowardly, low, cold, and I know not what. These men, I believe, so far as I can guess at their spirit, if they had lived in the days of our Saviour, and had beheld that gentle, meek, humble, peaceable spirit, which did infinitely shine forth in him, would have gone nigh to have reproved him for not carrying on his own kingdom with sufficient vigour and activity; if not have judged Christ himself to be much Antichristian. I hope you see nothing in all my discoveries of the active spirit of religion that savours of such a fiery spirit as this. (2.) When I do so highly commend the active spirit of true religion, and the vigorous temper of truly religious souls, I would not be understood as if I thought all such souls were alike swift, or that any such soul did always move with like swiftness, and keep a like pace towards God. I know that there

are different sizes of active souls, yea, and different degrees of activity in the same soul, as may be seen, Cant. v. 3, compared with the sixth verse of the same chapter, and in many other places of scripture.

But yet, that none may flatter and deceive themselves with an opinion of their being what indeed they are not, I will briefly discover the sluggishness and inactivity of Christians in a few particulars. I pray take it not ill though the greater part of Christians be found guilty; for that is no other than what Christ himself has prophesied.

1. The active spirit of religion in the soul will not suffer men to take up their rest in a constant course of external performances; and they are but slothful souls that place their religion in anything without them. By external performances I mean not only open, and public, and solemn services, but even the most private, and secret performances that are in and by the body, and without the soul. It is not possible that a soul should be happy in anything that is extrinsical to itself, no, not in God himself, if we consider him only as something without the soul: the devil himself knows and sees much of God without him; but having no communications of a divine nature or life, being perfectly estranged from the life of God, he remains perfectly miserable. I doubt it is a common deceit in the world, men toil and labour in bodily acts of worship and religion in a slavish and mercenary manner, and think, with those labourers in the

parable, that at the end they must needs receive great wages, and many thanks, because they have borne the heat and burden of the day. Alas! that ever men should so grossly mistake the nature of religion, as to sink it into a few bodily acts and carcase-services, and to think it is nothing else but a running the round of duties and ordinances, and a keeping up a constant set and course of actions! Such an external legal righteousness the apostle Paul, after his conversion, could not take up with, but counted it all loss and dung in comparison of that God-like righteousness which was now brought into his soul, that inward and spiritual conformity to Christ, which was now wrought in him: "That I may be found in Christ, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection; and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." I know indeed that men will be loth to confess that they place their religion in anything without them; but, I pray, consider seriously wherein you excel other men, save only in praying or hearing now and then, or some other outward acts, and judge yourselves by your nature, and not by your actions.

2. The active spirit of religion, where it is in the soul, will not suffer men to take up their rest in a mere pardon of sin; and they are but slothful

souls that could be so satisfied. Blessed is the man indeed whose iniquities are pardoned. But if we could suppose a soul to be acquitted of the guilt of all sin, and yet to lie bound under the dominion of lusts and passions, and to live without God in the world, he were yet far from true blessedness. A real hell and misery will arise out of the very bowels of sin and wickedness, though there should be no reserve of fire and brimstone in the world to come. It is utterly impossible that a soul should be happy out of God, though it had the greatest security imaginable that it should never suffer anything from him. The highest care and ambition indeed of a slavish and mercenary spirit is to be secured from the wrath and vengeance of God, but the breathings of the ingenuous and holy soul are after a divine life, and God-like perfections. This right gracious temper you may see in David, which is also the temper of every truly religious soul: "Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit."

3. The active spirit of religion, where it is in the soul, will not suffer men to take up their rest in mere innocence, or freedom from sin; and they are slothful souls that could count it happiness enough to be harmless. I doubt men are much

mistaken about holiness ; it is more than mere innocence, or freedom from the guilt or power of sin, it is not a negative thing ; there is something active, noble, divine, and powerful, in true religion. A soul that rightly understands its own penury and self-insufficiency, and the emptiness and meanness of all creature-good, cannot possibly take up its rest, or place its happiness in anything but in a real participation of God himself ; and therefore is continually making out towards that God from whom it came, and is labouring to unite itself more and more unto him. Let a low-spirited, fleshly-minded Pharisee take up with a negative holiness and happiness, as he doth, “God, I thank thee that I am not” so and so : a noble and high-spirited Christian cannot take up his rest in any negation or freedom from sin. Every pious soul is not so learned, indeed, as to be able to describe the nature and proper perfection of a soul, and to tell you how the happiness of a soul consists, not in cessation and rest, as the happiness of a stone doth, but in life, and power, and vigour, as the happiness of God himself doth : but yet the spirit of true religion is so excellent and powerful in every pious soul, that it is still carrying it to the fuller enjoyment of a higher good : and the soul doth find and feel within itself, though it cannot discourse philosophically of these things, that though it were free from all disturbance of sin and affliction in the world, yet still it wants some supreme and positive good to make

it completely happy, and so bends all its power thitherward. This is the description which you will every where find given in scripture of the true spirit of holiness, which hath always something positive and divine in it, as, "Cease to do evil, learn to do well;" and, "Put off the old man, put on that new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." And accordingly a truly pious person, to use the Apostle's words, though he know nothing by himself, yet doth not thereby count himself happy.

4. The active spirit of true religion, where it is in the soul, will not suffer men to take up their rest in some measures of grace received; and so far as the soul doth so, it is sluggish and less active than it ought to be. This, indeed, oftentimes comes to pass when the soul is under some distemper of proud selfishness, earthly-mindedness, or the like, or is less apprehensive of its object and happiness; as it seems to have been the case of the spouse, "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?" Some such fainting fits, languishings, surfeitings, insensibleness, must be allowed to be in the pious soul during its imprisoned and imperfect state: but we must not judge ourselves by any present distempers, or infirmities. The nature of religion, when it actuates the soul rightly and powerfully, is to carry it after a more lively resemblance of God, which is the most proper and excellent enjoyment

of him. A mind rightly and actually sound is most sick of love; and the nature of love is, not to know when it is near enough to its object, but still to long after the most perfect conjunction with it. This well of water, if it be not violently obstructed for a time, is ever springing up till it be swallowed up in the ocean of divine love and grace. The soul that is rightly acquainted with itself and its God, sees something still wanting in itself, and to be enjoyed in him, which makes it that it cannot be at rest, but is still springing up into him, till it come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of its Lord. In this holy, loving, longing, striving, active temper, we find the great Apostle: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And by how much the more of divine grace any soul hath drunk in, the more thirsty is it after much more.

5. The active spirit of true religion, where it is powerfully seated in the minds of men, will not suffer them to settle into a love of this animal life, nor indeed suffer them to be content to live for ever in such a kind of body as this; and that soul is in

a degree lazy and slothful, that doth not desire to depart and be with his Lord. The pious soul eyeing God as his perfect and full happiness, and finding that his being in the body doth separate him from God, keep him in a poor and imperfect state, and hinder his blissful communion with the highest good, groans within himself, with the Apostle, that mortality were swallowed up of life. I know not how much, but I think he hath not very much of God, neither sight of him nor love of him, that could be content to abide for ever in this imperfect, mixed, low state, and never be perfected in the full enjoyment of him. And it seems that they in whom the love of God is rightly predominant, potent, flourishing, do also look earnestly “for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life,” as without doubt they ought to do. “What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?”

Let this suffice by way of general reprehension.

But more particularly, the consideration of the active nature of true religion may well serve to correct a mistake about the noble grace of faith. How dishonourably do some speak of this excellent and powerful grace, when they make it to be a slothful, passive thing, an idle kind of waiting, or a melancholic sitting still; where, indeed and in truth, is life and power. Be not mistaken in so high and eminent a grace: true faith doth not only accept the imputed

righteousness of Christ for justification, but by a lively dependence upon God drinks in divine influences, and eagerly draws in grace, and virtue, and life, from the fountain of grace, for more perfect sanctification: and for this cause, I think, a purifying virtue is ascribed to it, Acts. xv. 9. Faith is not a lazy languid thing, content to wait for salvation till the world to come; but is even now panting after it, and accomplishing it too in a way of mortification, self-denial, and growing up in God: it is not content to be a candidate waiting for life and happiness, but is actually drawing down heaven into the soul, attracting God to itself, and gaining still further participations of divine grace for its aid: its motto is that of the famous painter, "No day without a line:" it longs to find some divine lineament, some line of God's image drawn upon the soul daily. Faith is a giving grace, as well as receiving; it gives up the whole soul to God, and is troubled that it can give him no more: it binds over the soul afresh to God every day, and is troubled that it can bind it no faster nor closer to him. The believing soul is wearied because of murderers, murdering loves, lusts, cares, earthly pleasures, and calls mightily upon Christ to come and take vengeance upon them: it is wearied because of those robbers that are daily stealing away precious time and affections from God, which are due unto him, and calls upon Christ to come and scourge these thieves, these buyers and sellers, out of his

own temple. In a word, the pious soul is active, and faith is the very life and action of the soul itself.

Lastly, Let me exhort all Christians from hence to be zealous, to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, and longing after him; “stir up the grace of God that is in you; quench not,” that is, blow up, enflame “the Spirit of God in you.” Awake, christian soul, out of thy lethargy, and rejoice, as the sun, to run the race that is set before thee, and, as a mighty man refreshed with wine, to fight thy spiritual battles against the armies of uncircumcised, profane, and earthly concupiscences, loves, and passions. Eye God as your centre, the enjoyment of him as the happiness, and full conformity to him as the perfection of your souls; and then say, Awake, arise, O my soul, and hide not thy hand in thy bosom, but throw thyself into the very heart and bosom of God; lay hold upon eternal life. Again, Observe how all things in the world pursue their several perfections with unwearied and impatient longings, and say, Come, my soul, and do thou likewise. Converse not with God so much under the notion of a lawgiver, but as with love itself; nor with his commands, as having authority in them, but as having goodness, and life, and sweetness in them. Again, Consider your poverty as creatures, and how utterly impossible it is for you to be happy in yourselves, and say, Arise, O my soul, from off this weak and tottering foundation,

and build thyself upon God; cease pinching thyself within the straits of self-sufficiencies, and come stretch thyself upon infinite goodness and fulness. Again, Pore not upon your attainments; do not sit brooding upon your present accomplishments, but forget the things that are behind, and say, Awake, O my soul, there is yet infinitely much more in God; pursue after him for it, till thou hast gotten as much as a created being is capable to receive of the divine nature. In a word, take heed you live not by the lowest examples, (which thing keeps many in a dwindling state all their days) but by the highest: read over the spouse's temper, sick of love; David's temper, waiting for God more than they that watch for the morning, breaking in heart for the longing that he had to the Lord, and say, Arise, O my soul, and live as high as the highest. It is no fault to desire to be as good, as holy, as happy as an angel of God; and thus, O my soul, open thy mouth wide, and God hath promised to fill thee!

CHAP. VI.

That religion is a lasting and persevering principle in the souls of men—The grounds of this perseverance assigned—first, negatively, it doth not arise from the absolute impossibility of losing of grace in the creature, nor from the strength of man's free will—Secondly, affirmatively, the grace of election cannot fail—The grace of justification is neither suspended nor violated—the covenant of grace is everlasting—the Mediator of this covenant lives for ever—the promises of it immutable—the righteousness brought in by the Messiah everlasting—An objection answered concerning a regenerate man's willing his own apostacy—An objection answered, drawn from the falls of saints in scripture—A discovery of counterfeit religion, and the shameful apostacy of false professors—An encouragement to all holy diligence, from the consideration of this doctrine.

I COME now to the third property of true religion contained in these words, and that is, the perseverance of it. And here the foundation of my following discourse shall be this proposition :—

“True religion is a lasting and persevering principle in the souls of good men.” It is said of the hypocritical Jews, that their goodness was as the “early dew, that soon passes away.” But that principle of goodness which God planteth in the souls of his people, is compared to a well of water,

evermore sending forth fresh streams, and incessantly springing up towards God himself. Our Saviour compares hypocritical professors to "seed sown upon stony ground," that springs up indeed, but soon withers away, but this well of water, which is in the sincerely pious soul, springs up into everlasting life; it springs and is never dried up; "it is a spring of water, whose waters fail not," or lie not, as it is expressed by the Prophet, Isa. lviii. 11, or if you look upon it under the metaphor of oil, as it is sometimes expressed in scripture, then it is truly that oil that faileth not, whereof the widow of Sarepta's cruise of oil was but a scant resemblance. Amongst other texts which the learned Dr. Arrowsmith brings to prove the infallibility of the perseverance of saints, this saying of our Saviour's which is the subject of my whole discourse, is one; who also quoteth Theophylact for the same opinion, namely, the perseverance of this principle, yea, and somewhat more, even the growth and multiplication of it. To the same purpose the same excellent author quoteth John x. 27, 28, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." In which our Saviour strongly asserteth the certain glorification of his people, by using a verb of the present tense, "I give unto them eternal life;" he will as certainly give it them, as if they had it already; except the words

do imply that they have it already, namely, the beginnings of it, even in this life: and if so, then the words yet more strongly assert the doctrine of perseverance; for how can that life be called eternal, which may be ended? In the same words he seemeth purposely to prevent fears, and beforehand to answer objections, by securing them both from internal and external enemies; they shall never perish, namely, of their own accord, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand; for the word in the original is such as doth secure them from the power of devils as well as men; and what is said of the church in general, is also certain concerning every true member of it in particular; “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Christ hath not only chosen and ordained his people that they should be holy, but also that they should persevere in holiness; not only that they should bring forth good fruits, but that their “fruits should remain.” Hence they are said to be born again of incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever. And he that is born of God, is said to have the seed of God in him, and remaining in him, and so remaining in him as that he shall never again commit sin, that is, shall not become any more ungodly, 1 John iii. 9. To all which may be added that strong and strengthening text, “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be

able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord:" which one text doth excellently assert both those high and comfortable doctrines of assurance and perseverance; and these doctrines are worthy to be honoured in the church, by a vindication of the passage from the corrupt glosses and cavils of the Papists, who have endeavoured to rob Christians of the sweetness which may be drawn out of that pregnant honey-comb: in a word, let the holy Psalmist's experience of the supporting virtue of this doctrine shut up the proof of it at present, who found himself wonderfully comforted by it after all his fears and falls, where he sings of the loving-kindness of the Lord in time past: "Thou hast holden me by thy right hand;" and, at present, "I am continually with thee;" that is, thou art continually with me; and, with the like courage and confidence, he speaks of all time to come, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." Now, although the doctrine of the perseverance of saints be thus fully and clearly laid down in scripture, yet it is easy to err in giving an account of it, and of the grounds of it. And therefore I shall proceed to the grounds of it, which I will briefly lay down negatively and affirmatively. First, negatively:—

1. The certain perseverance of the saints in a state of grace doth not arise from the absolute impossibility of losing of grace in the creature: it is one thing to affirm, that grace shall not be lost, and ano-

ther thing to affirm, that it is absolutely unloseable. God hath told us, that the world shall no more be drowned, but who will say for all that that it is not in itself capable of drowning? whilst we think to honour God by asserting the permanency of grace, we must take heed lest we make a god of grace, and so dishonour him. Grace, as it is in God, in the fountain, which divines sometimes call active grace, is eternal and unchangeable, not subject to any defection or alteration. There is no time, or place, or case, wherein the love and goodness of God faileth towards believers. It is one and the same in God towards his people, even when they are under the greatest desertions, and have no sense at all of it; we must not say the sun is grown dark, as often as a dark cloud interposeth between it and our sight. Yea, however it be most certain that the pure and holy God hateth sin even in his people, yet it is also certain that the good and gracious God loveth the persons of his saints; even at what time they sin: "For the love of God towards the regenerate," saith Davenant, "is not founded upon their perfect purity and holiness, but upon Christ Jesus the Mediator, who hath transferred their sins upon himself, and so hath redeemed them from the wrath of God." The love and kindness of God towards his people is absolutely unchangeable and everlasting. But grace in the creature, itself being a creature, is not simply and absolutely unchangeable or unloseable: there is a possibility of losing inherent

grace, if it be considered in itself; yea, and it would actually be lost and perish, but that God upholdeth his people with one hand, whilst he exerciseth them with the other. Though with all my might I desire to maintain the perseverance of the saints, yet I dare not, as the manner of some is, ground it upon the firmness and rootedness of faith in man, but upon the goodness and faithfulness of God, which is such towards believers, that he will keep them by his mighty power “through faith unto salvation,” as the Apostle expresseth it.

2. It doth not arise from the strength of man's free will, as if he were of himself able to keep himself for ever in a state of grace, when God had once put him into it. The saints indeed shall for ever will their own perseverance, as we shall see afterwards, but it is God that worketh in them even this will. Man's own free will, or self-sufficiency, is so far from being the ground of his perseverance in grace and holiness, that I do believe nothing in the world is more directly contrary to grace than habitual and predominant self-confidence; and, even in the saints themselves, there is nothing that tends more towards their apostacy, than this self-conceit and confidence of their own strength, as something distinct from God, though the same be not habitual and predominant; for they themselves are many times sadly weakened and set back by that means, and suffer many lamentable spiritual decays. This seems to have sometimes been the case of Hezekiah.

and of David too, and had like to have been the case of Paul, when he had so much abounded in revelations. Sure it is, that nothing doth more estrange the hearts of God's people from him, nor bind up the influences of divine grace and favour from them, than this security, confidence in the strength of their own wills, and vain opinion of self-sufficiency, which thing the sad experience of holy Christians doth attest: not only the Apostles James and Peter, but indeed all the true disciples of Christ in the world agree to that proverb, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." In a word, though "to do justly," and "to love mercy," have indeed much of religion in them, yet unto perseverance it is also required that a man deny himself and the sufficiency of his own free-will; and, in the Prophet's expression, "Walk humbly with his God." You know whose boast it was, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended;" and again, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee;" and what was the lamentable consequence of this self-confidence, you know likewise: wherefore "let him that standeth" by his own strength, "take heed lest he fall."

I proceed now to speak something affirmatively concerning the grounds of the saint's perseverance in a state of grace. I have already showed you that active grace is absolutely of an immutable nature: and although passive grace be not so, yet it shall not be totally and finally lost. For,

1. The grace of election cannot fail. When I think of that uncertain, conditional, mutable decree of saving men, which some ascribe to God, who is infinite and eternal wisdom and oneness, methinks I may, with great reason, apply the Apostle's words spoken concerning himself, and say, when God is thus graciously minded to choose his people to eternal life, "Doth he use lightness, or the things that he purposeth, doth he purpose according to the flesh," after the manner of men, who are unsteady and wavering in their determinations? Is there with him yea, yea, and nay, nay? What doth the Apostle mean by those words, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his?" The Apostle, in the foregoing verse, having related the apostacy of Hymeneus and Philetus, and the overthrow of some men's faith by their means, immediately subjoins this comfortable doctrine of the stedfastness and firmness of God's decrees of election, to prevent the offence which the saints might take against the falls of others, and to relieve them against the fears that they might possibly conceive concerning their own perseverance; as if he had said, let no one be offended, as if the salvation of believers were uncertain; it appears that these men were none of God's people, because they are seduced, and the faith that they had is overthrown; and as for your part who are chosen, fear not lest ye also should apostatize, it is not possible to deceive the elect in the

necessary and fundamental truths of the gospel, Matt. xxiv. 24; fear not lest ye also should be drawn away by the error of the wicked into perdition, "for the foundation of God standeth sure," &c. In which sentence, says Dr. Arrowsmith, almost every word breathes firmness and performance: nothing more firm in a building than the foundation; that you may not doubt of that, it is also called sure, or steady; this sure foundation is said to stand, that is, say the Dutch annotators, abideth stedfast and certain; for it is the foundation not of man's laying but of God's, with whom there is "no variableness nor shadow of change;" yea, farther, this foundation is said to be sealed; now, what is accounted more firm and sure than those things which are sealed with a seal? especially such a seal as this, "The Lord knoweth who are his;" though the wisest of men are often deceived in their opinions, yet the knowledge of God is infinitely infallible, according to that of Augustine, "If any of the elect perish, God is deceived; but God is not deceived, therefore none of the elect can perish, for the Lord knoweth who are his." When Samuel indeed went to separate one of the sons of Jesse from the rest of his brethren to be king over Israel, he first pitched upon Eliab, and afterwards rejected him, 1 Sam. xvi; but God is guilty of no inconstancy in that eternal election which he makes of men to be kings and priests unto himself. Those several acts of divine grace mentioned Rom. viii. 29, 30, though

they be many links, yet run one into another, and all from first to last make up but one chain; concerning which divine and mysterious concatenation one may boldly use that peremptory prohibition which our Lord useth concerning a less indissoluble conjunction, "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

- 2. The grace of justification is neither suspended nor violated; it admits neither of intercision nor recision, neither of pause nor period. There is nothing between justification and glorification in the Apostle's sentence, but the copulative *and*, Rom. viii. 30. There is nothing between a justified soul and glory, but a mere passage into it. May we be allowed to triumph with the holy Apostle in the same chapter, Who shall bring an accusation against God's elect? "It is God that justifieth." But what though you be at present justified, may some say, is there not a possibility of being unjustified again, may not the righteousness of the righteous be taken from him, may you not be condemned hereafter? But "who is he that shall condemn us? it is Christ that died." As if the Apostle had said, the love of God towards his justified ones is not grounded upon their purity, loveliness, or perfection, but it is founded upon their Redeemer, which Redeemer hath done enough, both to bring them into a justified state, and to keep them in it for ever; it is Christ that died to free them from sin, it is Christ that is risen again for their justifi-

cation ; “ who is at the right hand of God,” to deliver them from all their enemies, that maketh intercession for them, for their perseverance. God loves nothing but the communications of himself ; so far as anything partakes of the divine image, so far it partakes of divine favour and complacency : so that whilst a good man bears a resemblance to God so long he shall be accepted of him, and embraced in the arms of his love ; and that shall be for ever, as we shall see under the next head. Until you have blotted out all the image and superscription of God out of a pious soul, until you have raised out all the stamps and impressions of goodness ; in a word, until you have rendered him wicked and ungodly, you cannot remove him from the embraces of God, which thing men and devils shall never be able to do, as I have partly showed already, and shall yet show more at large.

It is true indeed that Adam fell from a just state, though not from a justified state ; for that supposes sin formerly committed. But this is no great wonder ; for he had his righteousness in himself, and his happiness in his own keeping : but the condition of believers is now more safe and firm, as depending not upon any created power or will, but upon the infinite and effectual help and strength of a Mediator, which will never fail.

3. The covenant of grace is everlasting. It hath pleased God to enter into a covenant of grace and peace with every believing soul ; which, I suppose.

I need not go about to prove, all Christians acknowledging it, though they do not all agree in one notion of it. Now this covenant, wherein God engages himself to be their God (for that is the summary contents of it on his part) is expressly called by the Apostle, "the everlasting covenant." And again, Jer. xxxii. 40, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them;" which covenant, and the everlastingness of it, are fully explained in the following words, "I will not turn away from them to do them good;" the inviolable nature of this covenant is also expressly asserted in that famous place, Jer. xxxi. 31, 32, "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, (which my covenant they brake;)" as if he had said, I will make a covenant that shall not be subject to breaches. In the former covenant with their fathers, I gave them laws to keep, which they kept not; but, in the new covenant, I will give them also a heart to keep my laws; it is not possible that covenant should be broken, one principle part of which is a heart both able and willing to keep it. The similitudes which God useth in the thirty-fifth, thirty-sixth, and thirty-seventh verses of that same chapter, do also further confirm and illustrate this doctrine of the everlastingness of this covenant of grace.

Under this head let me glance at three things.

(1.) The Mediator of this covenant lives for ever, and lives to make intercession for believers;

and from this the Apostle argues, that they shall be saved to the uttermost, or evermore, as the margin reads it. From this also the Apostle argues the unchangeable state of believers, as we observed before on Rom. viii. 34. Christ Jesus is always heard and accepted of the Father in all the requests that he maketh to him, according to that in John xi. 41, 42, "Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee, that thou hast heard me, and I know that thou hearest me always." If these things be so, then the perseverance of the saints is built upon a most certain foundation, is secured against the very gates of hell; for Christ hath prayed for them that they may be where he is; and, in the mean time, that they may be kept "from the evil," and that their faith, "fail not."

2. The promises of this covenant are immutable, "they are in Christ Jesus yea and amen;" as if one should say in Latin, *Certo certiora*, perfectly sure and certain. God, who is truth itself, will not, cannot be unto his people as a liar, or "as waters that fail," as the Prophet's phrase is. The infinite fountain of grace and truth cannot possibly become like one of the brooks which Job speaks of, which seem to be full of water, and are so at a certain winter season, but when the poor scorched Arabian comes to look for water in summer he goes away ashamed, because they are now vanished, they are consumed out of their place. Now the promise is concerning not only grace, but the final persever-

ance of it: if he promise pardoning grace, it is in these full and satisfying expressions, "I will remember their sin," any one of their sins, "no more." If he promise purging and purifying grace, it is in the like amplitude of phrase, "that they may fear me for ever;" and again, "they shall not depart from me;" with many other places of like importance.

3. God is said, to dwell in the souls of his people, in opposition to a way-faring man, "who turneth in to tarry for a night." God indeed hath promised, that it shall be said to them that were not his people, "Ye are the sons of the living God," Hos. i. 10; but never on the contrary, hath he any where threatened them that are the sons of the living God that it shall at any time be said to them, "Ye are not my people." True indeed, as to external profession, church-membership, mere covenant holiness, and outward communion, God doth many times disinherit and reject them that were so his people; but, as to true godliness, participation of the divine image, internal and spiritual communion, we may confidently say with the Apostle to the Corinthians, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;" or, with the same Apostle to the Thessalonians, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." Do what? why, that which he was speaking of and praying for, namely, "Preserve spirit, and soul, and body, blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I conclude then, that grace in the creature is a participation of him who is essential and perfect grace and goodness, a communication made by him of his holy nature, which becomes a living principle in the souls of men, a fountain sending forth a continued stream of holy dispositions and affections without intercision or cessation; though these streams run sometimes higher, sometimes lower, sometimes swifter, sometimes slower, yet they are never wholly dried up as the brooks of Tema were. For, where God hath once opened a fountain in the soul, he feeds it with fresh supplies from himself; as a fountain itself would dry up, if it were not nourished by the supplies of subterraneous waters. The perseverance of grace depends purely upon the supports and supplies of uncreated essential life and goodness. But how do we know that God will certainly afford these supplies? We build upon his goodness and love in Christ towards his people, which is infinite and unspeakable; and upon his faithfulness in accomplishing his promise, namely, that he will never leave nor forsake them, that he will keep them by his power unto salvation. They that are of the number of God's holy and chosen ones, shall, no doubt, continue of that number according to that in 1 John ii. 19. They that are truly in Christ shall abide in him. The seed of God remaineth in the godly, and they cannot sin, because they are born of God; "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one

toucheth him not." What can be more express and ample than that consolatory promise of our Lord made to his poor frail sheep, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."

But some one may say perhaps, What if man will apostatize? what if the saints themselves will forsake God? will he not then say of them, as the Apostle of the unbelieving husband, "If they will depart, let them depart?" Will not God forsake them that forsake him?

Ans. Yes, God will forsake them that forsake him; but they never shall forsake him: they being rightly renewed after the image of God, and perfectly overpowered by his grace, shall never will any such departure: "I will betroth thee unto me for ever." "It is certain," saith Dr. Arrowsmith, "that God will condemn all impenitent sinners; but it is as certain that all justified and regenerate sinners shall repent;—this always occurs through the influence of the Spirit." It seems unreasonable to demand, what if man himself will apostatize? seeing he is, by the grace of God, so renewed in his will, and put into such a condition, that he cannot will any such thing. "God doth not give unto his saints," saith Augustine, "only such help without which they could not persevere if they would (which was that which he gave Adam;) but he also worketh in them the will: that because they shall not persevere except they both can and will, his bounti-

ful grace bestoweth upon them both the *can* and the *will*: for their will is so inflamed by the Spirit of God, that they therefore can, because they so will; they therefore so will, because God worketh in them to will." Neither is it any disparagement or injury to the freedom of man's will, that it should be overpowered by divine grace, and determined only to that which is good. The indifference and fluctuation of the will of man is indeed the imperfection of it; and the more God reveals himself to the soul, as the chief good, the more this indifference of the will is destroyed, and the faculty is determined; not by being constrained, but indeed perfected. O happy liberty, for a soul to be indifferently affected towards its own happiness, and to be free to choose its own misery! The noblest freedom in the world is, when a soul being delivered from its hesitations, and healed of its indifferences, is carried like a ship with spread sails and powerful winds in a most speedy, cheerful, and steady course into its own harbour, into the arms and embraces of its own object. The grace of God doth never so overpower the will of man, as to reduce it to a condition of slavery, so as that man should not have a proper dominion over his own acts; but I think we do generally conclude that, in the world to come, in the future state, the wills of all glorified saints shall be so advanced and perfected in their freedom, as not in the least to verge towards anything that is evil, but shall in the most gladsome and steady

manner be eternally carried towards their full and glorious object, which the glorified understanding shall then represent in a most true, clear, and ample manner; and this we take to be the soul's truest liberty in the highest elevation of it. Now, although it be not altogether thus with us in this present world, for, by reason of the weakness and muddiness of our understandings which do here represent God unto us so faintly and disadvantageously, it comes to pass that the will cannot so freely and fervently, with so ardent and generous motions pursue its excellent object, as it shall do hereafter, yet I believe that the more God reveals himself to any soul, the more the fluctuations and volatileness of it are healed, and a true liberty of will, increased; and that he doth so far reveal himself to every truly pious soul, as to establish this noble freedom in him, in such a degree as will keep it from willing a final departure from him, and carry him certainly (how remissly and faintly so ever) towards the supreme and sovereign Good, till he come to be perfectly swallowed up in it. A will thus truly and divinely free, though it be not the proper efficient cause, yet certainly is an inseparable concomitant of final perseverance. So then the more God communicateth himself to any soul, the more powerfully it willet a nearer conjunction with him; and no soul, I conceive, to whom God communicateth himself savingly, can at any time will an utter separation from him.

As for the foulest faults of scripture saints, that are any where recorded, I know not what more can rationally be inferred from them, but that grace in the creature admits of ebbs and flows, is subject to augmentations and diminutions; which I know no sober person that denies. But I think the history of their lapses, if we take it altogether, hath a very favourable aspect upon the doctrine of perseverance; yea, for aught I know, one great design of God in penning those relations, might be to confirm this very doctrine, by giving us so express and ample an account of their repentance and recovery, that we are indeed to believe they were strengthened by their falls, so far were their falls from proving mortal to them: one would think, that if ever the habits of grace should be utterly suffocated and extinct, if ever they should languish even unto death, it would be under the power of such contrary acts as David and Peter committed, and especially Solomon, whose acts, for aught I can see, were as foul, and also often repeated, which is the likeliest thing that I know to destroy gracious habits. I know there are instances given of Joash, Hymeneus, Alexander, and Demas, utterly falling from that apparently gracious state, wherein for some time they had been. But it did never yet appear to me beyond contradiction, that ever they were any of them in such a state. Joash is put amongst the number of hypocrites by some that have examined his story: and for aught that can evidently appear to the contrary,

Demas might be no better. Most is pleaded for Hymeneus and Alexander, who put away a good conscience, and made shipwreck of faith, 1 Tim. i. 19. But it does not yet appear that the faith which they made shipwreck of, was any more than the profession or doctrine of the true faith; yea, rather it doth appear that it was no more. Neither does it at all appear, that they ever had that good conscience, which they are said, in our translation, to have put away, which may as fitly be rendered, *rejected*; for that we find to be the most common use of the Greek word ἀπωθέω, to reject, repel, or thrust away from one. I am not confident that this apostacy of theirs was total either, supposing it to be an apostacy; for however their faith was shipwrecked, possibly some plank or other of it might be left. And who dare say that it was final? the Apostle doth not, that I perceive, give them up for lost, but executes discipline upon them, as it seems, for their recovery, of which one might think, by the following words that he had some hopes—"that they may learn not to blaspheme." In short then, as to these two men, I conceive, that good conscience which they put away they never had, and the faith which they had was not the good faith. And as to the other two that were named, and indeed as to all other instances of the like nature, I suppose we may give this general answer, that either they did but seem to stand, or they did but seem to fall; the former perhaps was the case of

Joash, the latter of Demas. Whenever you observe therefore the backslidings of any seeming Christians, take heed of concluding rashly against the perseverance of saints, but rather infer with the holy Apostle, "They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us:" which words, if they be meant only of a communion in doctrine and profession, so as to conclude against a separation of such as are indeed in such a communion; then we may argue the more strongly, from the less to the greater, against the final apostacy of any that are in a higher and more excellent communion.

As for those texts of scripture that seem to suppose a man's falling away from grace, and turning from righteousness, I conceive a fair answer may be given to them, by the distinguishing of righteousness; and so it may be granted, that many men have turned away from, and utterly made shipwreck of, their legal righteousness, consisting in an external conformity to the letter of the precepts of the law, void of the supernatural and divine principle: it is indeed the common lot of these men that spring up thus fairly, and yet have no root, to "wither away." And yet, on the other hand, it abides an everlasting maxim of truth, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." If there be any texts that seem to speak of apostatizing from an evangelical righ-

teousness, a righteousness of faith, and so cannot well be solved by this distinction, as that in Heb. x. 38, and some others, it must be considered that suppositions are made of things impossible as well as possible, yea, and that even in the scriptures themselves, as some have observed from Gal. i. 8, 1 Cor. xv. 14, which texts do not at all imply what they suppose. I know indeed that eternal salvation is ordinarily entailed upon perseverance, and so is promised to us in scripture, as it were conditionally, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed."—"You hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh, through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreprouable in his sight, if ye continue in the faith, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel," &c. To the same purpose are those words, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved;" and "He that overcometh, and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give," &c. All which do strongly imply that there is no salvation but in a way of perseverance; and the words being laid down thus conditionally, especially the words first quoted, are indeed cautionary and quickening to the dull and sluggish minds of men, but do not necessarily imply any uncertainty or doubtfulness in the thing itself, no more than those words of the Apostle Peter, 2 Pet. i. 10, compared with the latter end of the twelfth verse, where he doth affirm them to be "established in the truth," and yet at

the same time doth speak to them by way of caution and encouragement. There are many texts that seem to suppose the apostacy of men in a state of regeneration, but not one that doth assert it, that ever I could yet find; but they are almost without number, that, to my apprehension, do more than seem to assert the contrary, namely, their final perseverance: of which perseverance we have also, through the goodness of God, thousands of instances; but no man could ever yet produce one instance of the contrary, but by mere conjecture; which conjectures, let them that make them see that they neither be over charitable towards men, or uncharitable towards God. Wherefore I do conclude that what is said concerning heaven and hell in the parable, as to one branch of it, is true of grace and wickedness; a gulf is fixed, and they that would pass from God to sin and the devil cannot: not that there shall ever be in any a real and predominant desire so to pass, as I suppose I have already proved; but it denotes the impossibility of the thing. It is equally impossible that a pious soul should fall from God, and become a hater of him, fall from his love and image, and take upon him the image of the devil, as it was for Lazarus to quit Abraham's bosom for the flames of hell: the case seems to be the same, the former being the most real heaven, and the latter the truest hell. True religion is that holy fire which, being once kindled in the soul from heaven, never goes out;

whereof the fire of the altar was but a faint and imperfect resemblance: it is as true in this respect of good men, as it is of wicked men in another, "their fire never goes out."

And here, now, we are presented with another great difference between true and counterfeit religion. All counterfeit religion will fade in time, though ever so specious and flourishing; all dew will pass away, though some lies much longer than other; all land-floods will fail; yea, the flood of Noah at length dried up, though it were of many months' duration. But this well of water which our Saviour speaks of here, will never utterly fail; cold adversity cannot freeze it up; scorching prosperity cannot dry it up; the upper springs of uncreated grace and goodness will evermore feed those nether springs of grace and holiness in the creature. Though heaven and earth pass away, yet shall the seed of God remain, "He that hath begun a good work will certainly perform it." Where the grace of God hath begotten a divine principle and spirit of true religion in a soul; there is the central force even of heaven itself, still attracting, and carrying the soul in its motions thitherward, until it have lodged it in the very bosom and heart of God. If any principle lower than true religion do actuate a man, it will certainly waste and be exhausted; though it may carry him swiftly in a rapid motion, yet not in a steady; though it may carry him high, yet not quite through. A meteor that is exhaled from the earth by a foreign

force, though it may mount high in appearance, and brave it in a blaze, enough to be envied by the poor twinkling stars, and to be admired by ordinary spectators, yet its fate is to fall down, and shamefully confess its base original. That religion which men put on only for a cloak, will wear out and drop into rags, if it be not presently thrown by as a garment of fashion. You have read of the seeming righteousness of Jehu, founded in ambition and cruelty—the piety and devotion of Joash, grounded upon a good and virtuous education—the zeal of Saul for the worship of God, and his fat sacrifices, growing upon a root of superstition, as Samuel that man of God interprets it, 1 Sam. xv. 22; and you have seen the shameful issue of all these dissemblers, and the offensive snuff in which all this candle-light religion ended, very much unlike to that sun-like lustre of true and genuine goodness, “which shineth more and more unto the perfect day,” according to that elegant description which the Spirit of God makes of it in the writings of Solomon, whose pen hath as much adorned this great truth as his life hath blotted it: “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” To this purpose I might fairly allege the frequent testimonies which the Holy Ghost in scripture gives concerning such hypocritical and unprincipled professors; that, having no root, they wither away in a scorching season, that they are again entangled in the pollutions of the world,

and overcome, that, like dogs, they turn to their own vomit again, and, like sows, wallow in the mire from which they had been washed, together with many others of the same nature: as also the prophecies that are made concerning them, that that which they seemed to have shall be taken away from them, that they shall proceed no further; “for their folly shall be manifest unto all men,” that “evil men and seducers,” and of those—self-seducers are the worst, “shall wax worse and worse,” with other places of the like nature. It were easy to record many histories of many men, especially of great men, who have speedily, I had almost said disdainfully, thrown off that semblance of humility, meekness, self-denial, justice, and faithfulness, which they had put on for a vizard during their probationaryship for preferment, the better to accomplish their selfish designs, and to be possessed of some base ends of their own. Still I will not deny but that a hypocrite may maintain a fair conformity to, and correspondence with the letter of the law of God; he may continue fair and specious to the very end of his life; yea, perhaps may go to his grave undiscovered either to himself or any in the world besides. I believe many men have lived and died Pharisees, have never apostatized from that righteousness which they professed, but have persevered in their formality and hypocrisy to the last. But although that counterfeit righteousness and reli-

gion may possibly not fade away, yet nevertheless, being of an earthly and selfish constitution, it is transitory and fading; and if it were soundly assaulted and battered with persecutions and temptations, no doubt, would actually vanish and disappear; on the other hand, the promise of God is pregnant and precious. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall walk and not faint."

Take encouragement from hence, all ye that love the Lord; go on in the strength of God; be the more lively, by how much the more you are assured that this well of water shall spring up in you into everlasting life. Make this good use of this comfortable doctrine: Will God indeed work in you "both to will and to do?" why then so much the rather "work out your own salvation," according to the Apostle. Will the Lord God be "with you?" will he "not fail you nor forsake you till you have finished all your work?" why then "be strong and of good courage," and do as good David infers and argues. Have you this hope, this firm ground of hope in the promise and goodness of God? why then, "purify yourselves as God is pure," according to the Apostle. Stop the mouths of those men that say the doctrine of perseverance is prejudicial to godliness: let them see, and be forced to acknowledge it, that the more a pious soul is assured of the infinite and unchangeable love and care of God

towards him, the more he is winged with love and zeal, with speed mounting up thither daily, where he longs to arrive. They that understand the doctrine of perseverance, do also understand that they must accomplish it in a way of dutiful diligence and watchful willingness; and if any grow profane and licentious, and apostatize from the way of righteousness which they have known, it is an evident argument to them that they are no saints, and then what will the doctrine of the perseverance of saints avail them?

CHAP. VII.

Religion considered in the consequence, of not thirsting—divine grace gives a solid satisfaction to the soul—This aphorism confirmed by some scriptures, and largely explained in six propositions—First, That there is a raging thirst in every soul of man after some ultimate and satisfactory good—Second, That every natural man thirsteth principally after happiness in the creature—Third, That no man can find that soul-filling satisfaction in any creature-enjoyment—Fourth, That grace takes not away the soul's thirst after happiness—Fifth, That the pious soul thirsteth no more after rest in any worldly thing, but in God alone—how far a good man may be said to thirst after the creature—Sixth, That in the enjoyment of God the soul is at rest—and this in a double sense, namely, so as that it is perfectly matched with its object—Secondly, So satisfied as to have joy and pleasure in him—The chapter concludes in a passionate lamentation over the levity and earthliness of christian minds.

HITHERTO we have taken a view of true religion, as it stands described in this pregnant text, by its origin, nature, and properties: we are now to consider it in the certain and genuine consequence of it; and that is, in one word, affirmatively, *satisfaction*; or, if you will, negatively, *not thirsting*: for so it

is, in our Saviour's phrase, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst."

Whilst I address myself to the explication of this phrase, I suppose I need not be so exact and curious as to tell you in order, with a certain kind of scholastical gravity, first, what is not; and then, what is meant by it: for I presume nobody will dream of a corporeal or gross kind of thirsting to be meant here. Grace doth no more quench the thirst of the body, than elementary water can relieve the panting of the soul. Nay, he himself was subject to this gross kind of thirst, who gave to others the water whereof, if they drank, they should never thirst more. If it be understood of a spiritual thirst, yet I suppose I need not to tell you either, that then it must not be understood absolutely: for it cannot possibly be, that the thirst of a soul should be perfectly allayed till all its faculties be filled up to the brim of their respective capacities, which will never be until it be swallowed up in the infinite and unbounded ocean of the Supreme Good.

But I conceive we may fairly come to the meaning of this phrase, *never thirst*, either by adding or distinguishing.

1. Then let us supply the sentence thus, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst after any other water." There is no worldly liquour can be so accommodated or attuned to the palate as to produce a universal satia-

faction, as that a man should be perfectly mortified to all variety : but this heavenly water which our Saviour treats of here, is so fitted to the palate of spirits, and brings such satisfaction along with it, that the soul that is made to drink of it suspends its chase of all other delights, counts all other waters but a filthy and offensive puddle, thirsts no more after any other thing, either through necessity or for variety. The more indeed the soul drinks of this water, the more it thirsteth after fuller measures and larger portions of the same ; and does not only draw in divine virtue and influences, but even longs to be itself swallowed up in the divinity, as we shall see further in the procedure of this discourse : but its thirst after all created good, after all the waters of the cistern, is hereby extinguished, or at least mastered and mortified. Or,

2. By distinguishing upon thirst, the sense of the phrase will be clearly this, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him” shall never be at a loss more, never be to seek any more, never be uncertain or unsatisfied as to his main happiness or supreme object ; he shall not rove and range up and down the world in an unfixedness and suspense any more ; shall not run up and down to seek satisfaction and rest any more. From an internal unsatisfiedness of the body, spring violent and restless motions and runnings up and down, by which thirst is contracted ; so that, by a metonymy, thirst comes to be used for unsatisfiedness which is the remote

cause of it; and, by a metaphor, the same phrase comes to be applied to the soul. I suppose I am warranted, by the sacred style, thus to interpret; especially by the use and explication of the phrase in Jer. ii. 25, where the Prophet intimates, that by thirst is to be meant a restless and discontented running up and down to seek satisfaction, "Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst;" which two phrases are of the same import, and signify no more than cease from gadding after your idols; and that this is the meaning of that thirsting appears by the answer that the wilful and desperate people make in the sequel of the verse: for instead of saying, No, but we will thirst; they cry, "No, but after them will I go." To thirst then is, in an unsatisfiedness and spiritual disquiet, to range up and down seeking something wherein ultimately to acquiesce. And, in this sense, it is most true what our Lord here pronounceth, that "whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." Of which thirst that famous proclamation of our Saviour's is to be understood—"If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink;" in which place also we must necessarily understand what is here expressed, that then he shall never thirst more.

It matters not much by which of these two ways we explain the phrase here of *not thirsting*; for, according to either of them, it will result in this theological maxim, namely, that "Divine grace, or

true Christian religion, gives a real and solid satisfaction to the soul that is principled with it."

This will appear plain though we apply but out of each Testament of the holy scriptures one text thereunto. I think it cannot reasonably be doubted, but that the prophecy and promise made in Isa. xlix. 10, is to be performed to believers in this present life; for so must the foregoing verses necessarily be understood: and there we have the doctrine expressly asserted, "They shall not hunger nor thirst, &c. for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them." To which those words of our Saviour are parallel, "He that believeth on me shall never thirst:" which doctrine of his is yet amplified and enlarged in John vii. 38, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." What greater security from thirst can be desired, than that one should be led by springs of water? Yes, one may be led by the springs of water, and yet not be suffered to drink of them: well therefore to put all out of fear, the pious soul shall contain within himself a spring of water; he shall have rivers of living waters in himself; and for his fuller security, these rivers shall be ever flowing too. It shall suffice at present, thus briefly to have established this conclusion. And now, having wrapt up the meaning of the words in this short position, I shall endeavour to unfold it in these six following propositions:—

1. "There is a raging thirst in every soul of man after some ultimate and satisfactory good." The God of nature hath implanted in every created nature a secret but powerful tendency towards a centre, the dictates of which, arising out of the very constitution of it, it cannot disobey until it cease to be such, and utterly apostatize from the state of its creation. And the nobler any being is, the more excellent is the object assigned to it, and the more strong and potent, and uncontrollable are its raptures and motions thereunto. Wherefore the soul of man must needs also have its own proper centre, which must be something superior to, and more excellent than itself, able to fill up all its indigencies, to match all its capacities, to master all its cravings, and give a plenary and perfect satisfaction: which therefore can be no other than the uncreated goodness, even God himself. It was not possible that God should make man of such faculties, and of that capaciousness as we see them, and appoint anything below himself to be his ultimate happiness. Now, although it be sadly true, that the faculties of the soul are miserably maimed, depraved, benighted, and distorted; yet I do not see that the soul is utterly changed in its nature by sin, so as that any other thing should be obtruded upon it for its centre and happiness, than the same infinite good that was such from the beginning, or so as that its main and cardinal motions should be ultimately directed to any other than its natural and primitive object.

The natural understanding hath not indeed any clear or distinct sight of this blessed object; but yet it retains a darker and more general apprehension of him, and may be said, even in all its pursuits of other things to be still groping in the dark after him: neither is it without some secret and latent sense of God, that the will of man chooseth or embraceth anything for good. The Apostle hesitates not to affirm, that the idolatrous Athenians themselves did worship God, though at that time indeed they knew not what they worshipped; their worship was secretly and implicitly directed to God, and did ultimately resolve itself into him, though they were not aware of it—"whom ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." Now that he declared God to them, appears abundantly by the following verses. What he says in point of worship, the same methinks I may say in point of love, trust, delight, dependence, and apply it to all sorts of idolaters, as well as image-worshippers, and affirm that the covetous idolater, even when he most fondly hugs his bags, and most firmly confideth in his riches doth ignorantly love and trust in God; the proud idolater, in the highest acts of self-seeking and self-pleasing, doth ignorantly admire and adore God; the ambitious idolater, even in the hottest chase of secular glory, and popular applause, doth ignorantly pursue, and advance God. For that rest, contentment, peace, happiness, satisfaction, which these mistaken souls do aim at, what is it other than God,

though they attribute it to something else which cannot afford it, and so commit a real blasphemy? for they that do in their hearts and course of their lives, ascribe a filling and satisfying virtue to riches, pleasures, or honours, do as truly, though not so loudly, blaspheme, as they who cried out concerning the calf of gold, *Exod. xxxii. 4*, “These be thy gods, O Israel!” &c. And in this sense that I have been speaking, one may safely affirm, that the most professed atheist in the world doth secretly pursue the God whom he openly denies, whilst his will is catching at that which his judgment renounceth, and he allows that Deity in his lusts which he will not own in heaven. The hypocrite professes to know God, but in works denies him; on the other hand, the atheist, though in words he deny God, yet in his works he professeth him: so natural and necessary it is for all men to acknowledge a Deity, though some are so brutish and besotted as to confine him to their own bellies; of whom the Apostle speaks, “Whose god is their belly.” I say natural; for it is not only some few men of better education, and more contemplative complexions, that hunt after this invisible and satisfying good; but indeed the most vulgar souls, retaining still the nature of souls, are perpetually catching at an ultimate happiness and satisfaction, and are secretly stung and tormented with the want of it. Certainly the motions of a soul are more strong and weighty than we are ordinarily aware of; and, I

think, one may safely conclude, that if there were no latent sense, or natural science of God, the poor man could not spend the powers of his soul so intensely for the purchasing a little food and raiment for the body, nor the covetous man so insatiably thirst after houses and land, and a larger heap of refined earth: did they not secretly imagine, some contentment, happiness, or satisfaction, were to be drunk in together with these acquirements, they would seem to be but dry and insipid morsels to a soul; which ultimate happiness and satisfaction, as I said before, can be no other than God himself, whom these mistaken souls do ignorantly adore, and feel for in the dark. Neither let any one think that this ignorant and unwary pursuit of God can pass for religion, or be acceptable in the sight of God; for, as it is impossible that ever any man should stumble into a happy state, without foresight and free choice, and be in it without any kind of sense or feeling of it, so neither can God accept the blind for sacrifice, or be pleased with anything less than reasonable service from a reasonable creature. As the Athenians, worshipping God by altars and images, are counted superstitious, not devout, so the whole generation of gross and sensual souls admiring, loving, and ignorantly coveting after God in the pictures and images of true goodness, are, indeed, truly blasphemers and idolaters, but religious they cannot be. We cannot excuse them from idolatry, who direct their worship purposely to

the true God, by or through images; much less can we be favourable to them who bestow their love, joy, confidence and delight, ignorantly upon the supreme and self-sufficient good, by or through any created good, in which they, as far as they understand, do terminate their devotion. I do not say that all souls have a distinct discovery of the good they aim at, it is evident they have not; but yet the will of every man is secretly in chase of some ultimate end and happiness, and indeed in its eager tendencies outflies the understanding. All which mystery seems to be wrapped up in that short but pithy inquiry, which, if it were a little otherwise modified, would be an excellent description of the natural soul, "Many say, Who will show us any good?" The nature of the object is set out in the word *good*; the eagerness of the motion, in the form of the question, "Who will show us?" and the ignorance of the mover appears in the indeterminateness of this object, which is well explained by the supply of the word *any*; "Who will show us any good?" And that this is the cry of every rational soul is insinuated by the word *many*; which many is also in metre multiplied into the greater sort, and must indeed necessarily be extended unto all.

2. "Every natural man thirsteth principally after happiness and satisfaction in the creature." The fall of the soul consisteth in its sinking itself into the animal life, and the business of every unrenewed

soul is in one kind or other still to gratify the same life; for although, as I have shown, God is in the bottom of these men's cares, and loves, and desires, and implicitly in all their thirstings, yet I may well say of them, as God says of the Assyrian monarch, at what time he executed his pleasure in correcting his people Israel, "Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so." God is not in all their thoughts, whilst they pursue that in the creature which really none but God alone can be unto them. They do ultimately direct, as to their intention, all their cares, and covetings, and thirstings, to some created object; all which are calculated for the animal life, the gratifying and accomplishing their own base lusts. This is very apparent in the idolatry of the Pagans, whose lusts gave being to their gods; and so their deities were as many as their concupiscences and filthy passions: to sacrifice to their own revenge and sensuality, under the names of Mars, Bacchus, and Venus, what was it else but to proclaim to all the world, that they took the highest contentment and satisfaction in the fulfilling of such kind of lusts? this was to them their god or supreme felicity. The case is the same, though not so expressly and professedly, with all carnal Christians who, although they profess the true God, yet in truth make him only a pander to their own lusts and base ends: though they *name the name of Christ*, yet in very deed deify their own passions, and sacrifice to the

gratification of their animal powers. The Psalmist, as we have seen, determines the main end of all men to be good, Psal. iv. 6, but, lest any man should be deceived in them, he presently tells us where this good was placed, ver. 7, namely, in "corn and wine;" by which we must understand the animal life, and whatsoever administers to the delight thereof. And certainly this will go far; for not only meats and drinks, sensual pleasures, gorgeous apparel, sumptuous buildings, splendid descent, honourable preferments, popular applause, inordinate recreations, and an unwieldy bulk of earthly riches; but also orthodox opinions, philosophical, political, yea, and scholastical learning, fair professions, much pompous worship, yea, and worship industriously void of pomp, specious performances; to which we may add the most seemly exercises of undaunted valour, unshaken constancy, unbribed justice, uninterrupted temperance, unspotted chastity, and unlimited charity, if much giving may deserve so sacred a name; even all these, and as many more, may serve only as fuel for the rapacious fire of lust and self-love, to maintain and keep alive the mere animal, or at most logical, life; and are ordinarily designed as sacrifices to that which we significantly call *self*, in contradistinction from God. I need not here declaim against covetous, luxurious, ambitious souls, the Apostle having so expressly prevented me by his plain and punctual arraignment of such men, Col. iii. 5, Phil. iii. 19, where he

charges them with placing a deity in their bags and bellies: otherwise I durst appeal to all the world that are not parties, yea, to the parties themselves, whether it be God or themselves that these persons do intend to serve, and please, and gratify; whether it be a real assimilation to God, and the true honour of his name, or some lust or humour of self-pleasing, self-advancing, and self-enjoying, that they sacrifice their cares and pains, and the main thirstings of their souls to. I am confident it will be easily acknowledged, that the covetous, voluptuous, and ambitious, do sacrifice all they are and do to the latter; but, alas! it is not yet agreed among men who are such; the hypothesis is granted, but the thesis is disputed: and indeed this is no wonder either; for it is as natural for the animal self-life to shift off guilt as it is to contract it; and the pride of the natural man is no less conspicuous in his wrongful endeavours to seem innocent of what he is indeed guilty, than his covetousness and voluptuousness is apparent in the matter wherein his guilt consisteth. It is not only these, and some few of the grossest and profanest sort of souls, that are guilty in this kind which I have been describing, though they indeed are grossly and most visibly guilty; but verily the whole generation of mere animal men, who have no principle of divine life implanted in them, do spend all their days, bestow all their pains, and enjoy all their comforts, in a real strain of blasphemy, from first to last. What

a blasphemous kind of philosophy was that which professedly placed the supreme good and chief happiness of man in the fruition of pleasures? And indeed all those kinds of philosophy which placed it elsewhere, in things below God himself, and the enjoyment of him, were no less profane, though they may seem somewhat less beastly: for whether the Epicureans idolized their own senses, or the more exalted Stoics deified their own faculty, placing their main contentment in their self-sufficiency, and the perpetual serenity and tranquillity of their own minds, it is too apparent that both the one and the other still moved within the narrow and low sphere of natural self, and grasped after a deity in the poor dark shadows, and glimmering representatives of him. But I am speaking to Christians: and, amongst these, let no man tell me how orthodox his opinions, how pure and spiritual his forms, how numerous and specious his performances are, how rightly he pays his homage, and prays to one living God by one living Mediator; I will willingly allow, and do with delight observe these things wherever they are; but yet all this doth not denominate a Christian: for still that of the Apostle must hold good, "His servants ye are to whom ye obey;" and I may add by somewhat a like phraseology, "His children ye are whom ye resemble;" his creatures ye are, as far as you can make yourselves so, whose sufficiency and sovereignty is most magnified in your hearts; his worshippers ye are whom ye

mostly love, trust in, delight in, depend upon ; in a word, that is your god which your soul doth mainly rest, and centre, and wrap up itself in. And, alas ! how visibly dear and precious is the self-central life, which is so universally pampered, cherished, and sacrificed unto, besides the invisible and more spiritual oblations that are made for this purpose. This is as true an Antichrist in the mystery as there is any literal Antichrist in the world : and of this one may as truly say, as St. John doth of the other, “All the world wondereth after the beast.” In a word then, whosoever saith in his heart concerning anything that is not God, what that rich man in the gospel said concerning his goods, “Soul, take thine ease in them and be merry,” the same is an idolater and blasphemer : and this I affirm to be the language of every apostate spirit, and unregenerate soul of man.

3. “No man can find that happiness, and soul-filling satisfaction in any creature-enjoyment, which every natural man principally seeketh therein.” Here are two things to be spoken to, namely, the enjoyments of men, or what they possess, and the satisfaction which the natural man seeketh in such possessions. For the first of these, I do not believe that ever any natural man had his fill of such possessions, I mean as to the quantity of them ; he never had so much of them as to be able freely to say, “It is enough.” The rational soul hath a strong and insatiable appetite, and wherever it

imagineth its beloved prey to be found, and filling enjoyment to be had, it is exceedingly greedy and rapacious; whether the same will ever be able to afford it or not, it matters not. The animal life is that voracious idol, not like Bel in the story, which seems only to eat up, but which doth really devour all the fat morsels, and sensual pleasures that are sacrificed unto it, and yet it is not filled therewith. The whole employment of the natural man, is nothing else but as the Apostle elegantly describes it, Rom. xiii. 14, "To make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof;" wherein however, to speak the truth, he loses his labour; for he sacrifices all to an insatiable idol, and pours it into a gulf that hath neither bottom nor bounds, but swalloweth up all into its barren womb, and is rather made to thirst, than to cease from thirsting by all that is or can be administered to it. I take that of Solomon, Eccl. i. 8, to be a clear proof in general of what I affirm, "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing;" the eye of man, as little as it is, is bigger than the whole visible world, which, although it may be wearied with looking upon various objects, as the English annotators observe upon these words, yet still desires new ones, and can drink them in without surfeiting: so that, although the acts of the eye be scant and finite, yet the lusts of the eye seem to have a kind of infinity in them. And indeed by the insatiableness of the eye and ear, is meant the greediness and voracity of

the flesh or animal life, as Mr. Cartwright hath well observed upon Prov. xxvii. 20, "Hell and destruction are never full, so the eyes of man are never satisfied;" where, by not being satisfied, is meant not having enough in quantity, as appears by the similitude in the former part of the verse. To the same sense he speaks, Eccles. iv. 8; v. 10. It would be endless to relate the monstrous and inexplicable gapings of covetous, ambitious, voluptuous, proud, vain-glorious minds after their respective idols. And indeed I need not descend to particular instances; for I suppose never any natural man could heartily say he had enough of riches, promotions, applause, sensual delights, eloquence, policy, prowess, or victory, or of any other thing which is accommodated to the gratification of the flesh, no more than any pious soul sojourning upon earth could ever yet be able to say he had enough of God and eternal life. So that, in a word, I know not how to apply any description to this insatiable and devouring principle more properly than that which the Prophet makes of hell, "She enlargeth herself, and openeth her mouth without measure, and all glory, multitude, and pomp, descend into it." I know there are of those men that pretend to have enough in quantity of these fleshly provisions; but I fear falsely and unjustly: for, as for the rich and honourable of the earth, it is too evident that they are still climbing higher, and grasping after more, as the great Alexander is said to have whined after

more worlds, when he conceited himself to be master of all this: as for the poorer and meaner sort of people, who are as ready sometimes to lay claim to this virtue of thinking themselves to have enough, as any other people whatsoever, it is too manifest to a wise observer, that it is not a real apprehension that they have enough, but either a lowness and weakness of spirit, arising from the meanness of their education, or a downright despair of ever getting more.

But be it imagined that the enjoyments of some natural men are enough in respect of quantity, yet still there is certainly wanting a true and sincere satisfaction of soul in such possessions; no man of all these finds that real happiness in those things which he so vehemently hunteth after. Solomon reduces all the pleasure and contentment that is to be found in multiplied riches to a very pitiful sum total, "What good is there to the owners thereof, save the beholding of them with their eyes?" And, alas! what is the sight of the eye to the satisfaction of the soul! The whole visible world is utterly too scant for, and incommensurate to the wide and deep capacity of an immortal spirit; so that the same can no more satisfy than a less can fill a greater, which is surely impossible. Whatever is in the world out of God, is described by the Prophet, Isa. lv. 2, to be *not bread*, there is the unsuitableness; and *not to satisfy*, there is the insufficiency of it as to the soul of man: on the other hand, the soul of

man is so vastly capacious, that though it be also ever so greedy and rapacious, snatching on the right hand, and catching on the left hand, as the Prophet describes the famishing people, Isa. ix. 20, yet still it is hungry and unsatisfied. Which ravenous and insatiable appetite of the sensual soul, is elegantly described by the Prophet in the similitude of a whorish woman, who prostituteth herself to all comers, and “multiplieth her fornications,” yet is “unsatisfiable, is not, cannot be satisfied.” The soul may indeed feed, yea, and surfeit upon, but it can never satisfy itself from any created good; nothing can ultimately determine and centre the motions of a soul, but something superior to its own essence; which, whilst it misses of, it is as it were divided against itself, perpetually struggling and fluctuating, and travailing in pangs with some new design or other to be at rest; like the old lioness in the parable of Ezekiel, breeding up one whelp after another to be a lion wherein to confide, but disappointed in all; or like the poor discontented butterfly, lighting and catching every where but sticking no where, adoring something for a god to-day, which it will be ready to fling into the fire to-morrow, after the manner of idolaters creating gods to themselves.

Neither the quantity, variety, nor duration of any created objects, can possibly fill up that large and noble capacity wherewith God hath endued the rational soul; but having departed from its centre, and not knowing how to return to its ori-

ginal, it wanders up and down as it were in a wilderness, and having an imperfect glimmering sight of something better than what itself as yet either is or hath, but not being able to attain to it, is miserably tormented, even as a man in a thirst which he cannot quench; yea, the more he runs up and down to seek water, the more is his thirst increased whilst he misses of it; so this distempered and distracted soul, whilst it seeks to quench its thirst at the creature-cistern does but inflame it, and in a continual pursuit of rest becomes most restless. That every unregenerate soul is in such a distressed, weary, restless state as I have been describing, appears most evidently by those famous gospel proclamations; one in Isa. lv. 1, 3, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters;" where, by the thirsters are meant those unfixed, unsatisfied souls, as appears by the second verse; the other in Matt. xi. 28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour," &c. where the promise of giving rest does plainly imply the restless state of the persons invited. There is a certain horror and anguish in sin and wickedness, even long before it be swallowed up in hell; a certain vanity and vexation folded up in all earthly enjoyments, though the same do not always sting and pierce the soul alike: so true is that famous aphorism of the Prophet Isaiah, "There is no peace to the wicked."

4. "Grace takes not away this thirst of the soul after happiness and plenary satisfaction." Love

and desire, and a tendency towards blessedness, are so woven into the nature of the soul, and inlaid in its very essence, that she cannot possibly put them off: however, it is the work of grace to change and rectify them, as we shall see under the next head. The soul of man is a kind of immaterial fire, an inextinguishable activity, always necessarily catching at some object or other, in conjunction with which she thinks to be happy; and, therefore, if she be rent from herself and the world, and be mortified to the love of fleshly and animal lusts, she will certainly cleave to some higher and more excellent object, as will more clearly appear by and by. Grace does not stupify the soul as to its sense of its own indigency and poverty, but, indeed, makes it more abundantly sensible and importunate. There are more strong emotions, and more powerful appetites in the pious soul towards its true and proper happiness, than in the ungodly and wicked. For the understanding of the regenerate soul is so enlightened, as that it doth present the will with an amiable and satisfactory object; which object, therefore, being more distinctly and perfectly apprehended, doth also apprehend, or lay hold upon, the soul, and attract her unto itself. That "the eyes are leaders in love," is most true of the eye of the soul; I mean the understanding, that first affects the heart with fervid passions. The first and fundamental error and mistake of the rational soul, seems to lie here, even in the understanding; here

lies the very root of the degenerate soul's distemper; and if this were thoroughly restored and healed, so as to present the will with pure and proper ideas and representations of God, it might be hoped that this ductile faculty would not be long before it clave unto him entirely: nay, it may be doubted whether it could possibly resist the dictates of it. Now in the regenerate soul this faculty is repaired; yea, I may say, that the spirit of regeneration first of all spreads itself into the understanding, and awakens in it a sense of self-indigency, and of the perfect, all-sufficient, suitable, and satisfactory fulness of God, in whom it sees all beauty, sweetness, and loveliness, in an infinitely ineffable manner, wrapped up and contained; which will be so far from allaying the essential thirst of the soul, and stifling its eager pantings, that it must needs give a mighty edge and ardour to its inclinations, and put it upon a more bold and earnest contention towards this glorious object, and charm the whole soul into the very arms of God. Therefore not thirsting in the text, must not be understood absolutely, as if grace did utterly extinguish the natural activities of the soul, and its propensions: but the regenerate and gracious soul doth not thirst in such a sense, as thirst implies a want of a suitable good, or dissatisfaction, or includes torment properly so called. In this notion of thirst grace doth indeed quench it, as I intimated in the beginning of this discourse, and as it will further appear in the procedure of it. But as to this most

essential thirst, this natural desire, or vergency of the soul after central rest and happiness, the same is so far from being extinguished or moderated by divine grace, that it is greatly improved, and mightily inflamed thereby. I suppose I need not enlarge upon so acknowledged a subject; therefore I will but present you with the instances of holy David in the Old Testament, and gracious Paul in the New. I need not, I suppose, magnify the holy and divine frame of David's spirit by any rhetoric of mine; God himself hath given the amplest testimony, and fairest character of him that I remember to have been, at any time, given of any man, when he owns him for "a man after his own heart:" and what a longing, thirsting soul this was, I need do no more to demonstrate than to turn you to some passages and professions of his own in his devout Psalms, such as Psal. xlii. 1. lxiii. 1. cxliii. 6, where he borrows the strongest inclinations that are to be found in the whole creation, to represent the devout ardours of his own soul; "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God"—"O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is"—"I stretch forth my hands unto thee; my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land:" yea, he seems like one that would swoon away for very longing: "Hear me, speedily, O Lord, my spirit faileth; hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit; I lift up my

soul unto thee; I flee unto thee," &c. The very same temper you will find in holy Paul, that chosen vessel of God, if you peruse his Epistles, in all which you will meet with devout and strong breathings of the same kind; particularly Phil. iii. 11—14, where he seems to be so thirsty after a state of heavenly perfection, that he longs after, if I mistake not the meaning of the eleventh verse, something that yet he knows he cannot arrive at whilst he is in this world, even the resurrection of the dead, or such a perfect state of purity and holiness, as belongs to the children of the resurrection.

5. "The pious soul thirsteth no more after happiness in any creature, nor rests in any worldly thing, but in God alone." This particular consists also of two branches: the former and negative part whereof seems to me to contain in it the scope and meaning of our Saviour, in these words which I am now interpreting. We have already seen that every unsanctified soul is restless, and craving, wavering, unsatisfied, inconstant to itself, and its choice: by reason of its natural activity, it is always spending itself in restless and giddy motions; but by reason of its ignorance, and unacquaintedness with the one supreme and all-sufficient Good, and the multiplicity of lower ends and objects, it is miserably distracted, and doth necessarily grapple with inevitable disturbances, in a continual unsteadiness, putting forth itself now towards one thing, anon to another, courting every thing, but matching with no-

thing ; like a fickle lover, that is always enamoured with the last feature he saw ; or a greedy merchant, that being equally in love with the pleasure of being at home, and the profit of being abroad, can stay long no where with any content, but has always most mind of the place where he is not.

The description that our Lord gives of the unclean spirit that is "gone out of a man," seems very aptly to agree with that unclean spirit that is in man, that being departed from God its proper rest and habitation, walketh through dry and desert places, I mean, empty and unsatisfying creature-enjoyments, seeking rest but finding none. It was an accidental affliction of believers, but is the natural and necessary affliction of every unbelieving and wicked soul, to wander up and down the world destitute, afflicted, tormented. Sinful self is so multi-form, and that one root, the animal life, has such a world of branches, that it is impossible to administer due nourishment to them all ; and yet they are all importunate and greedy suckers too : so that he must needs have a difficult task, and a painful province, that is constrained to attend upon so many, so different, and yet all of them so impatient and imperious masters. But I shall lose ground by thus going backward to what I considered under the second head, except I can make this advantage of it, to enforce that which I was going to speak of, with the greater strength and clearer evidence. The case standing thus with the unregenerate soul, as we

have seen in this short review, I now say, that divine grace allays the multifarious thirst of the soul after other waters, of which it could never yet drink deep, or if it drunk ever so deep, could not be quenched; it determines the soul to one object, which before was rent in pieces amongst many. It does not destroy any of the natural powers, nor dry up the innate vigour of the soul, as I made evident under the last head, but it takes it off from the chase of all inferior ends, and inadequate objects, setting it upon a vehement pursuit of, and causing it to spend all its powers not less vigorously, but far more rationally and satisfactorily upon, that object worthy of our love, the infinitely amiable and self-sufficient God. When the soul hath once met with this glorious object, is once mastered with this Supreme Good, is, by divine grace, enlarged, it cannot, with any ease, stretch itself upon the creature any more; that is too scant and insufficient for it. Certainly the soul that understands its own origin, nature, and capacity, and once comes to view itself in God, will see itself too large to be bounded by the narrow confines of self, or any creature, and too free to be bound down and chained to any earthly object whatever. The world indeed may, yea, and will labour to take off the soul; "What is thy beloved more than another beloved," that thou art so fond of him? "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" Be content, here is hay and provender;

stay with me this night; let us dally and make merry together a little longer. But these Syren songs are sung to a deaf ear; they cannot enchant the wise and devout soul that hath her senses rightly awakened, and exercised to discern between good and evil: O no, "I am sick of love," and sick of every thing that keeps me from my Beloved; and therefore, however you may go about to defile me through fraud or force, through surprise or violence, yet I will not prostitute myself to you. The gracious soul hath now discovered the most beautiful, perfect, and lovely object, even Him whose name is love itself; which glorious vision hath so blasted and withered the choicest flowers in nature's garden, that they have now no more form or comeliness, beauty or fragrancy, so as to deserve to be desired; she hath tasted the pure and perfect sweetness of the fountain, which has so imbittered all cistern-waters, that she finds no more thirstings in herself after them; which is that which our Saviour promiseth here, "shall never thirst." A pious soul cannot possibly be put off with anything short of God; give him his God, or he dies; give him ever so much fair usage in the world, ever so much of earthly accommodations, they are not accommodated to his wants and thirst, if they have not that God in them out of whom all worldly pleasures are even irksome and unpleasant, and all fleshly ease is tedious and painful: creature-employments are but a wearisome drudgery to a soul that is acquainted

with the work of angels ; and creature-enjoyments, in themselves considered, are very insignificant, if not burdensome to a mind that is feelingly possessed of the chief good.

But here it will be seasonable to take into consideration a grand inquiry, namely, Whether a good man may not be said in some sense to desire the creature, and how far such a person may be said to thirst after it. This I shall speak to as briefly, and yet as clearly as I can, in these four following particulars :—

1. “ All pious souls are not equally mortified to worldly loves, nor equally zealous and importunate lovers of God.” This is so evident, that I need not insist upon it. Abraham seems to have been as much higher and nobler in spirit than his brother Lot, as Lot was more excellent than one of the ordinary sons of Adam, I had almost said, than one of the Sodomites amongst whom he dwelt. The one leaves all the pleasant and plentiful accommodations of his native country, at the very first call out, not knowing whither he went, only relying upon the gracious guidance of him whom he followed ; he seems to reckon all soils alike for his sojourning, and the whole habitable world as his own city and home, as appears by his readiness to break up house, and quit his present habitation, rather than interfere with the conveniences of his nephew, Gen. xiii. 9. The other preferred a fruitful soil before a faithful society, and so in some

sense his body before his soul ; and yet, as if it had not been enough to make so unadvised a choice, he rests in it too ; yea, though he was so severely re-proved by the captivity that befel him there, whereby he was not so much called, as indeed carried away thence, yet this will not loosen him from his earthly conveniences, but he returns to Sodom, and from thence he will not part till he be fired out, nay, and then also it is with much lingering and lothness, Gen. xix. 16. It is evident I say, both from this and many other instances which I purposely omit, that it is so, that all pious souls are not equally careless of these earthly things, nor carried out with equal ardour and intemperance, as I may call it, towards the supreme and most glorious object ; of which I can assign no better reason than this, because they are not all equally pious. For,

2. “ So far as grace prevails, and religion in the power of it actuateth the soul in which it is planted, so far earthly loves decay and wither.” For these two cannot stand together, the love of the world is inconsistent with the love of God ; “ If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” So far as any soul is sanctified, so far is it mortified also to all creature-enjoyments, to all things that are only fuel for the animal life, honour, ease victory, plenty, liberty, relations, recreations, all the entertainments and delights in this lower life, yea, and this very life itself. Earthly and heavenly loves are to each other as the two scales of a pair of

balances, save that they are never found equally poizing, as the one rises the other falls; just so much advantage as this gets, that loses. The more the sensual and self-central life thrives and prospers, and the creature is exalted, the more religion and the divine life faint and flag in the soul: and as certainly, on the other hand, the more divine grace prevails, and the divine life flourisheth in the soul, the more all earthly objects wither away and lose their beauty, and the soul cooleth and languisheth as to its love and desire of them. So far as a regenerate soul is unregenerate, so far will she be bustling after other lovers: which regeneration will not, I conceive, be thoroughly perfected, and therefore these passions, not utterly extinguished, till this mortal put on immortality; or, as the Apostle speaks elsewhere, till "mortality be swallowed up of life."

3. For the preventing of rash and uncharitable judging, I do affirm, that "divine and holy souls are often mistaken by them that behold their ordinary converse and actions in the body." They are thought sometimes to take pleasure in the creature, and to gratify the flesh, when indeed it is no such matter; but they take pleasure in the image of God, or the evidence of his fatherly love, which they contemplate therein, and do perhaps, most of all, serve a spiritual end, and an eternal design in those very actions which others may think are calculated for the gratification of the animal life, and the service of the flesh. Let not the purblind world, nor the

self-befriending hypocrite, be judge, and it will appear that the truly pious soul counts nothing savoury to itself, but what represents, teaches, exhibits something of God, nothing pleasant but what hath a tendency to him: such a man doth not feel himself in his highest raptures, doth not value himself on his noblest accomplishments, doth not seek himself in his most excellent performances; be not mistaken, he doth not so much thirst after long life, riches, friends, liberties, as indeed after God in them all; these all signify nothing to him, if they bring him not nearer to his God, and conduce to his real and spiritual happiness. Yea, possibly, in his most suspected actions, and those that seem most alien from religion, and most designed to please the flesh, he may be highly spiritual and pure: so was our blessed Saviour we know, even in his conversing with scandalous sinners, eating and drinking with Publicans and notorious offenders, however he was traduced by a proud and hypocritical generation; and so I doubt not is many a good Christian, according to his measure, pure as Christ was pure. When a painted hypocrite, who can guess at the temper of others no other way but by what he finds in himself, and by what he should be and do, if he were under the same circumstances, comes to be judge of the actions or disposition of one who is transformed into the image of the divine freedom and benignity, you may easily imagine what a perverse sentence he will pass. It needs not seem very

strange, methinks, in spiritual things, any more than it is in corporeal things, that the most sound and healthful constitutions should, upon a lawful call, adventure themselves further than the crazy, and sickly, and familiarly converse with and handle, yea, and make good work with those briers and thorns, which would prove a snare, or a wound, or a pricking temptation to others. If it were possible for any man to arrive at the purity and perfection of his Saviour, and his firm and immoveable radiation in true goodness, he would find himself so wholly dead to sin, and all temptations and motions thereunto, that he would be able to walk upon the most boisterous waves, without fear of being swallowed up in them, and to take up in his hands the most venomous serpent, not dreading the sting of it. However, the apprehensions and actions of more perfect and refined souls are not rashly to be judged; for they may easily be mistaken, either by the unhallowed hypocrite, or the more imperfect and impotent saint.

4. To answer yet more fully, I do affirm, that “no truly religious soul in the world doth so thirst after the creature, as to place its main happiness in it, or to seek satisfaction from it.” However all holy souls may not be alike weaned from the world, nor equally loving of God, however the affections and actions of some may really be, and of others may seem to be, too gross and fleshly, yet no one of all these, in whom this new and divine life is indeed

found, doth erect a self-supremacy in his own soul, nor take his full and complete rest and happiness to consist in any creature-communion whatsoever. Surely this, of not thirsting, is so far a consequence of true religion, as that no religious soul in the world can be content to exchange the presence of God, and acquaintance with him, for any thing, for all things besides; or, if you will, plainly thus, no such person could be content, no, not for all the world, the glory of heaven not excepted, if it may be supposed, to be wicked and ungodly: so that by thirsting here must not be meant some weak wishings, and fainter propensions of the soul towards created objects; for certainly there is no soul found in a body of earth, in which these are not found, no, nor yet some more lively and stronger strugglings after them, (how strong they may be in a good Christian, and yet predominated over by grace, we cannot punctually determine;) but, by thirsting here, must be meant the most quick and powerful breathings, the highest and strongest ardencies, the predominant and victorious motions and desires of the soul, which do, as it were, fold up the whole soul, and lead all its powers and faculties with it into a grateful captivity. Thus shall he thirst no more, who hath once drunk of these waters which flow forth from the presence of the Lord of life, and which the blessed Redeemer of the world is here said to give.

But, which is the latter branch of this particular,

this inspired soul which we have been describing, thirsteth after his happiness in God alone, that is, in the enjoyment of him. We have already seen that grace does not destroy the natural and essential longings of the soul after a satisfactory good, but rather enhances them, and that the pious soul is most thirsty of all, but not with a creature-thirst, as is before proved ; it remains then, that his thirsting after rest and happiness is terminated upon God alone. And so indeed it appears in the instances of holy men recorded in holy writ, which I have under the last head spoken something to. But to those passages and professions which I quoted out of Psalm xlii. 1, 2, &c. you may add such as Psalm iv. 6, which is the voice of every pious soul ; “ Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us : ” Psalm xxxix. 6, 7, “ Surely every man walketh in a vain show ; surely they are disquieted in vain ; he heapeth up riches, &c. And now, Lord, what wait I for ? my hope is in thee ; ” where you have the different seekings and centrings of the ungodly, and of the godly soul, elegantly described. Lastly, You may, in Psalm lxxiii. 25, again view the term or end of the pious man’s ambition ; “ Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee ! ” Which translation of the words doth in a lively manner set out the good man’s end, and aim, and object, and happiness, and indeed his all : or, if we translate, perhaps more fitly, with Mollerus, yet they afford us the

same doctrine, "Who will give me to be in heaven and with thee? on earth I desire nothing."

And thus have we despatched the fifth proposition, namely, that the pious soul thirsteth no more after happiness in any creature, or rest in any worldly thing; and come to the sixth and last particular designed for the explication of this not thirsting of the religious soul, which is this:—

In the enjoyment of God, this soul is at rest, is fully satisfied. I do not mean so satisfied as not to thirst after any more of him, as I have often hinted; but so satisfied, as to be perfectly matched with an object transcendently adequate to all its faculties, and their respective capacities; and so satisfied as to have peace, and joy, and triumph in him. To these two I will speak distinctly, and so pass on.

Now, for the better understanding of the first of these it should be noticed, that the reasonable soul and the faculties of it are of a vast, large, and noble capacity. It is universally granted by all that are not Sadducees, that the capacity of angels is very great and noble; and that the condition of the human soul is not much inferior to it, may, I think, be gathered from the Psalmist's words, "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels:" which words, although the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews applies them to Christ, Heb. ii. 9, and indeed they have a marvellous aptness to him, according to the Dutch translation, which runs thus, "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, who was be-

come a little less than the angels, by reason of the sufferings of death; that he should, by the grace of God," &c. Yet I see nothing hindering but that they may be well applied to the excellent condition of man by creation; especially considering that many other passages of the Old Testament have a double aspect, one more ordinary and obvious, which was most clearly understood by the Prophet that wrote them; the other more abstruse and mysterious, principally intended by the Spirit that inspired him, and only to be understood by the revelation of the same Spirit: such are those passages, I conceive, which are found in Isa. vii. 14. Hosea xi. 1, interpreted by the Evangelist, Matt. i. 23, and ii. 15; as also Jer. xxxi. 15, with many more. But however it goes with that text, and whether or not the souls of men be so near of kindred to the angels, as to their own comprehensions; yet, that they are capable of a most noble and excellent happiness, and much allied to God himself, doth appear from such texts of scripture as doth require them to be "holy as God is holy;" to be "perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect." Neither need it seem to any incredible, that the rational soul should be so capacious; for we are no more to judge of the angelical temper, and noble actings of the separated soul, by what we see it to be and do in this body of flesh, than one can judge of the prowess and puissance of a renowned warrior at the head of an army, by what we discern in him when he lies

bound in chains, or of the power and splendour of the sun, by what we discern of it when it is eclipsed, or miserably beclouded; or, if you will, no more than we can judge of a man by the imperfections of his childhood: for so the Apostle Paul seems to state the case, 1 Cor. xiii. 10, 11, plainly implying, that the present and future condition of the soul is comparable to the minority and adult state of a man; as if he had said, “the soul, in its future and separate state, will act as much nobler a part than what it doth now, as the soul of the wisest man in the world acteth more nobly than what it did when he was a child:” yea, and what is still more to our present purpose, he seems clearly to intimate in the twelfth verse, that this improvement shall happen not so much by the more evident propounding of the object, as by the more ample illumination and corroboration of the faculties. In the next place it will be easily inferred, that all created good is too scant and insufficient for this capacious spirit of man; too short a bed to stretch itself upon: nay, it cannot contract itself so as to be accommodated to any worldly good, without pain and anguish. From both which it will be naturally and necessarily concluded, that God alone is that adequate object which can match the soul of man, and satisfy it, as being infinitely superior and transcendent to it. The enjoyment of God is that ultimate end, and perfect good that is only able to fix the spirit of man; which otherwise, not meeting

with its chief good, would be tossed to and fro, and labour under perpetual disquietness, and restless fluctuations. God is that almighty goodness and sweetness, who alone is able to draw out all the appetites of the soul into himself, satisfy all its cravings, charm all its restless motions, and cause all its faculties, in the purest and most complacential manner, to conspire together to give up themselves wholly and entirely to himself.

Secondly, From this conjunction with omnipotent goodness, ariseth pure peace, yea, joy and triumph, to the religious soul. For the clearer understanding of this I should premise, what some have wisely observed, that there is a natural congruity between God and the soul, she being a spiritual substance, and he being a spiritual good, only suitable to her. This seems to be evident by experience; for we see how difficult, I had almost said, impossible it is, utterly to eradicate and extinguish all sense of virtue and goodness out of the soul of man; to which purpose I think our divines generally speak, when they allow of some holy relics, something of the image of God remaining in the most degenerate souls, however all men have reduced the same to a very poor and inconsiderable spark, and many have raked that very spark under ashes too, and imprisoned that remainder of truth in unrighteousness, living according to those unnatural and foreign principles and conceptions that they have unhappily drunk in. Hence it is, I suppose, that sin and

wickedness are so often styled the defilement of the soul. Now, we know, that whatsoever defileth, is adventitious and improper; and hence it is, that sin many times stings and wounds the consciences of those that take most pleasure in it, because being so perfectly contrary to this noble and inbred sense of the soul. Allowing, then, this natural sympathy that the soul of man hath with its Creator, it will be easy to give a philosophical account of that peace, joy, and triumph, of which the soul must needs be possessed, or rather indeed transported with, that finds and feels itself in conjunction with its centre, and in the dearest embraces of its Creator. It needs not seem strange, that the soul should mightily congratulate itself in its arrival at its own haven; nay, it were strange if it should not dissolve into secret joy and pleasure in the hearty entertainments of so blessed and proper a guest as God is to it; nay, indeed it were unreasonable to imagine, that the conjunction of such noble and discerning faculties with so perfect and proper an object, should not beget the truest and sincerest delight and pleasure imaginable. The delights of an earthly and sensual mind are filthy and dreggy, in comparison of those pleasures of the refined and purified soul, which must needs live most gracefully, triumphantly, and deliciously, when it converseth with God most intimately. Certainly if there be any innocent and well-natured self-feeling, or self-pleasing, in the world, this is it; though

indeed to speak truly, it deserves a better name. It cannot be but that a pious soul, being in its right senses, should taste a sweetness in these pure and divine accomplishments wrought in it by the eternal spirit of righteousness; which self-pleasing is no more blameable, than that natural pleasure which every creature finds in the enjoyment of that which is most aptly accommodated to its necessities, and most perfective of its happiness; which pleasure, I say, ariseth in the soul from its sensible union with God in the spirit, and enjoyment of him: by which enjoyment of God, you will easily perceive that I do not mean the bare pardon of sin, or an abstract justification; for this is not the attainment that is perfective of the soul, neither could it alone, if we could suppose it alone, fill up the capacities of the soul, or make it happy, however the rapturous joys of the unprincipled hypocrite spring principally from the opinion and false apprehension of this; which indeed I take to be a notable, though not infallible, sign of a mercenary, low-spirited, and fleshly-minded Christian: but, by it, I mean the soul's being really regenerated into the image of God, consisting in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, and her implantation into the root Christ Jesus, by which she partakes of his divine life, power, and Spirit.

And yet, besides this, I conceive there is a more theological account to be given of these joys and pleasures which the renewed soul doth so plentifully reap upon her return to God, from whom she had

so long straggled by sin and wickedness. For the “God of hope filleth the pious soul with all peace and joy in believing.” Christ doth on purpose speak words to the hearts of his disciples, that “their joy may be full.” But whether the most benign and gracious Father of spirits doth immediately from himself inspire the holy soul with divine joys and pleasures, kindled, as I may say, with nothing but his own breath; or whether he bring them to his holy mountain, and into his house of prayer, and by that, or any other like means, make them joyful, and of glad heart, as in the day of a solemn festival, as he hath promised to do, Isa. lvi. 7, and xxv. 6, however it be, I say, sure it is that he frequently puts a gladness into their hearts beyond that of the harvest or the vintage, and makes them to rejoice with “joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Having now unfolded the meaning of the gracious soul's not thirsting any more, I should pass to the last thing contained in the text; but finding myself oppressed in my spirit by the consideration of this necessary consequence of true religion, when I compare the temper of Christians with it, I must crave leave to stay a little and breathe. And what shall I breathe but a sad and bitter complaint over that low, earthly, selfish, greedy spirit which actuateth the world at this day, yea, and the generality of professors of that sacred religion which we call Christianity. Alas! what a company of thieves and murderers, I mean, base and sensual loves and

lusts, lodge in those very souls who would be taken for temples consecrated to the name, and honour, and inhabitation of the eternal God, the Spirit of truth and holiness. O what pity is it that the precious souls of men, yea, and of Christians, the best of men, that are all capable of so glorious liberty, so high and honourable a happiness, should be bound down under such vile and sordid lusts, feeding upon dust and gravel, to whom the hidden manna is freely offered, and God himself is ready to become a banquet! And O what a shame is it for those who profess themselves to be children of God, disciples of the most holy Jesus, and heirs of his pure and undefiled kingdom of heaven; for these, I say, willingly and greedily to roll themselves in filthy and brutish sensualities, to set up that on high in their souls, which was made to be under their bodies, and so to love and live as if they studied to have no affinity at all, but would be as unlike as they could, to that God, and Redeemer, and unfit for that inheritance! How often shall it be protested to the Christian world, by men of the greatest devotion and seriousness, that it is utterly mad, and perfectly vain, to dream of entering into the kingdom of heaven hereafter, except the kingdom of heaven enter into our souls during their union with these bodies? How long shall the Son of God, who came into the world on purpose to be the most glorious example of true and divine purity, exact and perfect self-denial and mortification, how

long shall he lie by in his word as an antiquated pattern only cut out for the apostolical ages of the world, and only suited to some few morose and melancholy men? Is it not a monstrous spectacle, and to be hissed out of the world with the greatest indignation, a covetous, voluptuous, ambitious, sensual saint? With what face can we pretend to true religion, or a feeling acquaintance with God, and the things of his personal service and kingdom, whilst the continual bleatings and lowings of our souls after created good do bewray us so manifestly, and proclaim before all the world that the beast, the brutish life, is still powerful in us? "If ye seek me," saith Christ to his followers, as well as he did once to his persecutors, "then let these go;" let go the hold of these earthly objects, let vanish these worldly joys and toys; "withhold your throat from thirst, and your feet from being unshod," and come follow me only, and ye shall have treasure in heaven; for he that will not deny all for me, is not worthy of me. Ah sad and dreadful fall, that hath so miserably cramped this royal offspring, and made the king's son to be a lame Mephibosheth! Ah doleful apostacy! How are the sons of the morning become children of darkness, and the heirs of heaven vassals and drudges to earth! How is the King's daughter unequally yoked with a churlish Nabal, that continually checketh her more divine and generous motions! "How unhappily art thou matched, O my soul!" And yet, alas! I see it is

too properly a marriage; for thou hast clean forgotten "thine own people, and thy Father's house." Take up, oh take up a lamentation, thou virgin daughter of the God of Zion: formerly indeed a virgin, but now, alas! no longer a virgin, but miserably married to an unworthy mate, that can never be able to match thy faculties, nor maintain thee according to the grandeur of thy birth, or the necessary pomp of thy expenses, and way of living; nay, thou art become not only a miserable wife, but, in so being, thou art also a wicked adulteress, prostituting thyself to the very vilest of thy lawful husband's servants; if thou be not incestuous, it is no thank to thee, there being nothing in this world so near of kin to thee, as to make way for incest. "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return; put away thine adulteries from between thy breasts, and so shall the King yet again greatly desire thy beauty;" for so he hath promised, Jer. iii. 21, that when there shall be a voice heard upon the high places, weeping, and supplications of the children of Israel, because they have perverted their way, and forgotten the Lord their God, and the backsliding children shall return, and then he "will heal their backslidings."

CHAP. VIII.

The term or end of religion, eternal life, considered in a double notion—First, As it signifies the essential happiness of the soul—Second, As it takes in many glorious appendixes—The noble and genuine breathings of the pious soul after, and springing up into, the former—The argument drawn from the example of Christ—Moses and Paul moderated—It ends in a serious exhortation made to Christians, to live and love more spiritually, more suitably to the nature of souls, redeemed souls, resulting from the whole discourse.

I AM now come to the last thing whereby this most noble principle is described, namely, the term or end of it; and that is said here, in the text, to be “everlasting life.” This is the highest pitch of perfection, unto which the new creature is continually growing up; which the Apostle Paul hath expressed with as much grand eloquence, as words are able to magnify it, calling it, “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:” this is that unbounded ocean, which this living fountain, by so many incessant issues, and unwearied streamings, perpetually endeavours to empty itself into, or rather to embosom itself in. Now, what this is, we must confess with the Apostle John, and indeed we have more reason to make such a confession than he had, that

it doth not yet appear, namely, neither fully nor distinctly: but yet, since I am thus cast upon the contemplation of it, it will be a suitable and agreeable matter to enquire into it; and though it surpass the power and skill of all created comprehensions to take the just dimensions, and faithfully give in the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of it; yet we may attempt to walk about this heavenly Jerusalem, as the Psalmist speaks of the earthly, “and tell the towers thereof, mark her walls, consider her palaces,” that we may tell it to the generation following.

1. Then, we will consider “eternal life” in the most proper notion of it, as it implies the essential happiness of the soul; and so it is no other than the soul’s pure, perfect, and established state. By a state, I do designedly undervalue that grosser notion of a place, as that which scarcely deserves to enter into the description of such a glory, or, at best, will obtain but a very low room there: by purity, I do purposely explode that carnal ease, rest, immunity, affluence of sensual delights, accommodated only to the animal life—which last Mahometans, and the former too many professed Christians, and the Jews almost, generally dream of, and judge heaven to be. By perfection, I distinguish it from the best state which the best men upon earth can possibly be in. So then I take eternal life in the primary and most proper notion of it to be the full, perfect, and everlasting enjoyment of

God, communion with him, and a most blissful conformity of all the powers and faculties of the soul to that eternal goodness, truth, and love, as far as it is or may become capable of the communications of the Divinity. This life was, at the highest rate imaginable, purchased by our ever blessed Lord and Saviour in the days of his flesh, and here in the text promised to every believing soul. Now, inasmuch as we are ignorant both of the present capacity of our own faculties, how large they are, and much more ignorant, how much more large and ample they may be made, on purpose to receive the more rich and plentiful communications of the divine life and image, therefore can we not comprehend either the transcendent life, happiness, and glory, or that degree of sanctity and blessedness which the believing soul may be advanced to in another world. The Popish schoolmen do nicely dispute about the sight of God, and the love of God, to wit, in whether of these the formal blessedness of the soul consisteth, ill separating those which God hath so firmly joined together, as if it were possible that either a blind love, or a jejune and unaffectionate speculation, could render a soul entirely happy: but it is much safer to say, that the happiness and eternal life of the soul standeth in the possession or fruition of God; and this doth necessarily import the proper perfection of every faculty. Nothing can be the formal happiness of a spirit that is either inferior or extrinsical to it; it must be

something divine, and that wrought into the very nature and temper of it. I hesitate not to affirm, that if the soul of man could possibly be advanced, so as to receive adoration or divine power, yet if it were in the mean time void of divine dispositions, and a God-like nature; it would be far from being glorified, and made happy as to its capacity. What health is to the body, that is holiness to the soul; which haply the Apostle alludes to when he speaks of the “spirit of a sound mind,” 2 Tim. i. 7.

2. There is another notion of “eternal life” which some contend for, by which they mean not barely the essential happiness of the soul, but that with the addition of many suitable and glorious circumstances—the essential happiness of the soul, as it is attended with the appendixes of a glorified body, the beholding of Christ, the amicable society of angels, freedom from temptations, the knowledge of the secrets of nature and providence, and such like: to which may be also added, though of a lower degree, open absolution, or a visible deliverance of the saints out of the overthrow of the wicked, at the conflagration of the world, power over devils, eminence of place, enjoyment of friends, and such like. Now, let us briefly consider what tendencies there are in the religious soul towards each of these. And here I must crave leave to speak jointly both of the end, and of the motion thereunto; though it may be thought that the former only falls fairly under our present consideration.

(1.) Then, I suppose, that "eternal life," in the first sense of it, is intended here, to wit, the essential happiness of the soul, or its perfect and everlasting enjoyment of God. For the description is here made of religion itself in the abstract, or that principle of divine life, which Christ Jesus implanted in the soul; and being so considered, it is hard to conceive how that should spring up into any of these appendant circumstances, or into anything but the completion and perfection of itself; though the religious soul, taken in connection with them, possibly may. And, indeed, though we should allow, which we shall take into consideration under the next head, that many of those high scriptural phrases, which are brought to describe the future condition of believing souls, do principally respect the appendixes of its essential happiness, (as a kingdom, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, an inheritance reserved, a place prepared, and the like,) yet it seems very unnatural to interpret this phrase, "life," and "eternal life," any otherwise than of that which I call the essential happiness of the soul: but if we interpret it of this, the sense is very fair and easy. Thus, this principle of divine life is continually endeavouring to grow up to its just altitude, to advance itself to a triumphant state, even as all other principles of life do naturally tend towards a final accomplishment, and ultimate perfection. Carnal self, or the animal life, may be indeed said to be a well of water

too, poisonous water; but that springs up into a sensual life, popular applause, self-accommodations, or, if you will, in the Apostle's phrase, into the fulfilment of the lusts of the flesh. This I speak only by way of illustrative opposition; for, to speak more properly, this corrupt principle hath in it the central force of death and hell, and is always tumbling downward; whereas this divine principle is always climbing upward: but they do both agree in this, that they both seek their own gratifications, and study to acquire their respective perfections. The everlasting and most glorious enjoyment of God is certainly most perfective of the soul; and therefore is most properly and most deservingly said to be its "eternal life," according to that of our Saviour, John xvii. 3. Now, this "eternal life" is not a thing specifically different from religion, or the image of God, or the divine life, but indeed the greatest height, and the greatest possible perfection of itself: even as the sun at noon-day is not a light really distinct from what it was in the first dawns of the morning, but a different degree, and far more glorious state; which seems to be the very similitude whereby the Spirit of God illustrateth the matter in hand, Prov. iv. 18, or, as a man of perfect age is not a distinct species from a child, but much more complete and excellent in that species; to which the Apostle refers, treating of this subject, 1 Cor. xiii. 11. Man hath not two distinct kinds of happiness in the two distinct worlds, that

he is made to live in ; but one and the same thing is his blessedness in both, which, as I said before, must needs be the enjoyment of God. The translation made of the text is very suitable to this notion : for this divine principle is said to spring up, not unto, but into, everlasting life, as if he should say, it springs up till it be swallowed up into the perfect knowledge, love, and enjoyment of God. Even as youth is swallowed up in manhood, so this grace is swallowed up in glory, and not so much abolished, as indeed perfected.

By this phrase, the genius of true religion, and the excellent temper of the truly religious soul, is most lively described. This is the soul, that, being in some measure delivered from its unnatural bondage, and freed from its unhappy confinement, now spreads itself in God, lifts up itself to him, stretches itself upon him, is not content with a heaven merely to come, but brings down a heaven into itself, by carrying up itself unto, and after, the God of heaven. God is become great, only great in the eye of such a Christian ; he is indeed become all things to him. Whilst this principle is rightly and actually predominant in him, he knows no interest but to thrive and grow great in God ; no will, but to serve the will, and comply with the mind of God ; no end, but to be united to God ; no business, but to display and reflect the glory and perfections of God upon the earth. The main business of his life, I say, is to serve him ; the main ambition of

his soul, to be like to him ; and his main happiness in this world, to be united to him ; and in the world to come, to be swallowed up in him : in this world, to know, and love, and rest, and delight in, and enjoy God more than all things, and in the world to come, to enjoy him more so. The gladsome growings up of the tender flowers to the friendly sun, being once powerfully attracted with his precious and benign influences, and the cheerful haste with which the sympathetic needle so amorously pursues the enchanting loadstone, being once rightly touched and affected with it, do a little, though but a little, resemble and represent the motions of a spirit impregnated with this divine principle, and strongly impressed with the image and stamp of God : he puts in his hand by the hole of the door, and the bowels of the espoused soul are presently moved, yea, melted for him, Cant. v. 4. He casts the skirt of his garment, the mantle of his love, and presently the converted soul leaves all to follow him. Faith, hope, and love, are knitting and springing graces, and this eternal life is the end and perfection of them all ; not that any one of them, I conceive, shall be utterly abolished, as some conclude concerning the two former, though without good ground, I think, from the Apostle's words, 1 Cor. xiii. 13. But faith will be ripened into the most firm and undisturbed confidence, affiance, and acquiescence in God ; hope will be advanced into a more cheerful, powerful, and confident expectation,

having for its object the perpetuation of the soul's felicity ; and love will become much more loving, and more clearly distinguishable from the imperfect longings and languishings of this present state, when it shall flower up into pure delights and complacencies, resting and glorying in the arms of its adequate, satisfactory, and eternal object. The faith of the hypocrite, and indeed his hope too, is still springing up into self-preservation, deliverance, liberty, a splendid and pompous state of the church, (that is, of his own party) or some such thing as will gratify the animal life, and there it terminates; but the faith of the sincere and religious soul springs up into eternal life ; it knows no term but "the salvation of the soul," 1 Pet. i. 9, as his hope knows no accomplishment but a state of God-like purity and perfection, 1 John iii. 3. The mere natural man lives within himself, within a circle of his own, and cannot get out ; whether he eat, or drink, or pray, or be zealous for the popular pulling down of the political Antichrist, he is still in his own circle, he is still sacrificing in all this to that great *helluo*, the animal life, as I have already made evident: but the pious soul is disinterested of self, and so is still contriving the advancement of a nobler life within itself, and moving towards God, as his supreme and all-sufficient good. Give him all that the whole world can afford, he cannot fix, nor settle, nor centre here: God hath put into him a holy restless appetite after a higher good, which he would rather be,

than what he is. I know indeed that the soul that is thus divinely free may be hindered in its flight ; but it will deliver itself from the clog at length. You may choke and dam up the streamings of this fountain, perhaps, but they will burst out again ; you may cast ashes upon this pure fire for a time, but it will flame out again : such a damp cannot arise, no, not from hell itself, as to extinguish it. The Philistines, I remember, stopped the wells of water which Abraham had digged in Gerar, “and filled them with earth,” Gen. xxvi. 15. But this well of water, which God diggeth in the holy and humble soul, cannot be stopped, neither by the devil, that king of Gerar, that is, of wanderings, Job i. 7, nor by any of his servants, but it will find vent upward : though you endeavour to fill it with earth, which indeed is the likeliest to choke it, though you cast the dust and gravel of earthly pleasures, profits, or preferments into it, yet it is a well of living water, and will work its passage out. The hungerings of the pious soul are not, cannot be satisfied, till it come to feed upon the hidden manna, nor its thirstings quenched, till it come to be swallowed up in the unbounded ocean of life and love.

But I find I cannot divide “springing up” from “eternal life,” nor pursue the term of religion, but I must also take in the notion of the religious soul, whereby he pursues it, which I have already handled in my discourse ; therefore I will quit this head, and take a short view of the second.

(2.) The secondary and more improper notion of "eternal life," I mentioned, was that which takes in the circumstances or appendixes of it. And here we must needs allow, that the Holy Scriptures do openly avouch some of these circumstances, as those especially of the first class that I named, of some of which it seems to make great account; and possibly the Scripture may somewhere or other imply all the rest, even those of the inferior rank. Again, we will allow, that many of those phrases which the Scripture uses to describe the blessed state of the other world, do principally respect these appendixes of the soul's essential happiness; such perhaps are the "crown of righteousness" mentioned by the Apostle Paul. "The prize of the high calling," mentioned by the same Apostle. "The house which is from heaven." "A kingdom, an incorruptible inheritance, a place prepared, mansions, a reward, praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. i. 7. And that "glory, honour, and peace," spoken of by the Apostle, Rom. ii. 10. These are all Scripture descriptions of the other state, and I suppose we may grant them to have a peculiar reference to this secondary essential happiness of the soul: though I know not any necessity there is to be so liberal in our concessions; for it may be fairly said concerning all, or most of them, that the design of these phrases is not so much to establish this less proper notion, or to point out the circumstances of the glorified state, as to

insinuate how much more ample and glorious the state shall be than this in which we now are ; as a prize is looked upon as somewhat more excellent than what is done or expended to acquire it, (it must needs be so esteemed by runners or wrestlers) ; a kingdom is a more glorious state than that of subjection, and an inheritance is incomparably more ample than the pension that is allowed the heir in his minority.

But these things being conceded, it doth not appear how far, or under what notion, the religious soul, as such, doth spring up into these additional glories, and thirst after them. I know there are many that speak very highly of these appendixes, and allow the pious soul a very high and irrespective valuation of them ; and this they principally infer from the example of Christ himself, as also of Moses and Paul. Give me leave, therefore, to suggest something, not to enervate, but to moderate the argument drawn from these persons ; and after that, I shall briefly lay down, what I conceive to be most scriptural and rational in this matter.

1. As for the example of Christ, it seems to make not much for them in this matter. For though the text is very plain, that “for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross,” and this joy seems plainly to be his session “at the right hand of God ;” yet, if by this joy we understand a more full and glorious possession of God, and a more excellent exaltation of his human nature, to a more

free fruition of the divine, then it cannot be applied to anything but the springing up of the gracious soul into its essential happiness; which I have already contended for, as being the proper genius of such a soul: or if by this joy and throne we understand the power that Christ foresaw he should be vested with, of leading captivity captive, trampling under feet the powers of hell and darkness, and procuring gifts for men, which seems to me to be most likely, then it belongs not at all to men, neither can this example be exhibited for imitation.

As for the instance of Moses, who is said to have had "respect to the recompense of the reward." It is not yet granted, that that "recompense of reward" relates principally to these appendants of the soul's essential happiness, neither can it, I suppose, be evinced: but, though I should also allow that, which I incline to do, yet all that can be inferred from it is but a respect that Moses had, as our translation well renders it, or some account which he in his sufferings made of this recompense; which was a very warrantable contemplation.

The Apostle Paul, indeed, doth openly profess that he looked for, and desired the coming of Christ from heaven, upon the account of that glorious body which he would then clothe him with, and so he might, and yet not desire it principally and primarily, but secondarily, and with reference.

And this leads me to the general answer that I was preparing to give, which is this:—some of these

circumstances which I have named, especially that of the glorified body, may be reduced to the essential happiness of the soul, or included in it, so that the soul could not otherwise be perfectly happy. It is the opinion of all divines, I think, that a Christian is not completely happy, till he consist of a soul and body both glorified. And, indeed, considering the dear affection, and essential aptitude, that God hath planted in the human soul for a body, we cannot well conceive how she should be perfectly happy without one: and this earthly body is, alas! an unequal yoke-fellow, in which she is half stifled, and rather buried, than conveniently lodged; so that it seems necessary, even to her essential happiness, that she should have some more heavenly and glorious body, wherein she may commodiously and pleasantly exert her innate powers, and whereby she may express herself in a spiritual and nobler manner, suitable to her own natural dignity and vigour, and to her infinitely amiable, and most beloved object.

Concerning the rest of the circumstances which cannot be thus reduced, I conceive that such of them as are necessary to the essential happiness of the soul, by way of subserviency, may be eyed, and desired, and thirsted after, secondarily, under this notion only, as being subservient to that essential blessedness. I confess, I do not understand under what other notion a religious soul can lift up itself to them; I mean, not so far forth as it is holy and

religious, and acts suitably to that divine principle which the Father of spirits, or rather the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath implanted in it. And if there be any other circumstance which cannot be reduced to one of these kinds, I suppose it may be reckoned amongst the objects and gratifications of the animal life, and not to make up any part of the godly man's heaven, or that eternal life which religion springs up into: for I easily imagine, that a fleshly fancy may verily be mightily elated with the desire of such a heaven as is suitable to it; and that a mere animal man may be as heartily desirous to be in such a kingdom of God, as he hath shaped out to himself, as he is utterly unwilling that the true kingdom of God, such as the Apostle describes, Rom. xiv. 17, consisting in "righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," should be in him. If our continual cry be after safety, self-preservation, liberty, redemption, and deliverance from those things only that oppress and grieve our fleshly interest, and our thirstings principally terminated in knowledge, though it be of God himself, freedom from condemnation, power over devils, yea, or any visible pomp, glory, or splendour, though it be of ever so ethereal and heavenly a nature, what do we more than others? what is all this more than may naturally spring up from the animal life, and may be ultimately resolved into what is carnal?

Wherefore, as a result from the whole discourse, especially from this last part of it, let me earnestly entreat of all the professors of this holy religion,

which the blessed Messiah, Christ Jesus, hath so dearly bought for the world, and so clearly revealed in it, not to value themselves by anything which the power of natural self-love may exert or desire, perform or expect, nor by anything below the image of God, and the internal and transforming manifestations of Christ Jesus in them; the perfection of which is eternal life, in the most proper and true notion of it. I know that I have often suggested the same lesson in this short treatise, but I know also, that I can never inculcate it often enough; nay, the eloquence of angels is not sufficient to imprint it upon the hearts of men. Possibly it may startle some hypocritical professors, and carnal gossellers, (God grant it may effectually!) and make the ears of many that hear it to tingle, but yet I will proclaim it, "It is possible for a man to desire not only the things of this world, which St. James speaks of, (James iv. 3,) but even heaven itself, to consume it upon his lusts; and he may as truly be making provision for the flesh to fulfil it in the lust thereof, in longing after a kind of self-salvation, as in "eating, and drinking, and rising up to play." Certainly a true christian spirit, rightly invigorated and actuated by this divine and potent principle, christian religion, cannot look upon heaven as merely future, or as something perfectly distinct from him; but he eyes it as life, eternal life, the perfection of the purest and divinest life communicable to a soul, and is daily thirsting after it, or ra-

ther, as it is in the text, "springing up into it." I know that heaven sometimes is called a rest, in opposition to the dissatisfaction of the uncentred and unbelieving soul; but, in opposition to a sluggish, inert, and dormant rest, it is here said to be life, eternal life. Let us show ourselves to be living Christians, by springing up into the utmost consummation of life: let it appear that Christ Jesus, the Prince of life, who was manifested on purpose "to take away our sins," hath not only covered our shame, and, as it were, embalmed our dead souls, to keep them from putrefaction, and strewed them with the flowers of his merits, to take away their noisome smell from the nostrils of his Father, but hath truly advanced, reinstated, and made the souls flourish that sin had so miserably degraded and deflowered. Deliver yourselves, O immortal souls! from all those unsuitable and unseemly cares, studies, and joys; from all those low and particular ends and lusts, which do not only pinch and straiten, but even debase and degrade you. Let it not be said, that the king of Sodom made Abraham rich; that your main delight, happiness, and contentment, is derived from any prosperous, plentiful, peaceable, pompous state, anything that may be called a self-accommodation, either in the world that now is, or that which is to come; but from the righteousness of faith, and your vital union with the Father and the Son; to whom, in the unity of the Spirit, be honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

ON

COMMUNION WITH GOD,

BY SAMUEL SHAW.

ON
COMMUNION WITH GOD.

1 JOHN I. 3.

*“ Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son
Jesus Christ.”*

THESE words express the way of a Christian's living, and that kind of converse whereby a good man is distinguished from all other men.

A good man is not differenced from other men by anything without him, any church privileges which are common to hypocrites and sincere Christians; any external visible performances, in which the disciples of the Pharisees may be more abundant and more specious than the disciples of Christ, much less by any corporeal or temporal enjoyment or ornament, strength, beauty, riches, descent, &c. nor by any carnal relation, though it were to Abraham, as the Jews boasted of their father Abraham, but by something internal, substantial, by a relation to God; the character of a good man must be drawn from his correspondence to the chief good, and the happiness of a soul must be judged of by its relation to life, and love, and blessedness itself.

Things external, corporeal, temporal, make some difference amongst men, but it is only nominal and titular in comparison: by these, men are said to be rich or poor, noble or ignoble; but men are really and substantially differenced by the relation that they have to God; by this, they are good or bad, godly or wicked. This is the most certain and proper criterion of a good man, namely, Communion with God: in all other things he may be like other men, but in this he differs from and excels them all. This is a character proper or peculiar to them; for it agrees to every good man, to none but a good man, and always to him, as we shall see hereafter. The ground of my discourse then shall be this short and plain proposition, namely,

“A pious man hath communion with God.”

In order to the more distinct handling hereof, I must premise a few things briefly.

1 “That the gracious and loving God made nothing miserable of all that he made.” There are no slaves born in this great house of the world. He made all things out of himself, and he hath no idea of evil in himself, so that it was not possible that he should make anything evil or miserable. Every thing was good, Gen i. and so in some sense happy. He was free to make the world, but making it he could not make it evil or miserable. Every thing is the product of Almighty love and goodness.

2. “The happiness of every creature consists in its acting agreeably to that nature that God gave

it, and those ends which he propounded to it, and suitably to those laws which he gave to all ;” which laws were contrived with the greatest suitability to those natures, and subserviency to those ends. Every creature is in its kind happy, whilst it acts agreeably to that nature which the wise Creator implanted in it ; as the sun runs its race without ceasing, and rejoices so to do, and is, in some sense, happy in so doing. Departing from that nature it becomes miserable, as the earth bringing forth briers and thorns, instead of those good fruits which it was appointed to bring forth, is said to be cursed, Gen. iii. 17, 18.

3. “The happiness of the creature is higher or “lower, greater or less, according as it comes nearer to God, or is farther off from him,” according as it receives more or less from him, according to what communion it hath with him. The life and happiness of the sun is much lower than that of a man, because it cannot enjoy such high and excellent communications from, or communion with God, as man doth.

4. “There can be no communion without likeness.” The sun shines upon a stone wall, as well as upon man ; but a stone wall has no communion with the sun, because it hath no eyes to see the light of it, as man hath ; nor can receive the benign influences of its heat, as the herbs do. A log of wood lieth in the water as well as the fish, but it hath no communion with the water, nor receives

any advantage by it as the fish doth. God is present, according to his infinite essence, with the devils as with the angels ; but they have no likeness in nature to him, and so no communion with him, as these have.

5. "God hath given a more large and excellent capacity to man, than to any other of his creatures upon earth." God hath endued man with reason, and so made him capable of a higher life, and a more excellent communion with his Maker than all the rest. Of all sublunary creatures, the rational soul only is capable to know, love, serve, enjoy, imitate God, and so to have a glorious communion with him. The sun, in all its glory and brightness, is not so excellent a being as any soul of man upon this account. And although man, by his fall, lost his actual communion with God, yet he is a reasonable creature still ; he hath not lost his capacity of receiving influences from him, and enjoying communion with him. The world, when it is at the darkest, is yet capable of being enlightened.

6. "When the nature of man is, by divine grace, healed of its distemperedness, and restored to its former rectitude, to act suitably to the end for which it was made, and to spend itself upon its proper object, then man comes to have right communion with God, and to be happy." All rational souls are capable of holding communion with God, but all do not hold communion with him ; but they that express the purity and holiness of the divine

life, that know God, and live like him, these are his children, Matt. v. 45, and those only do rightly and really converse with him: when the Spirit of God informs these rational souls, and communicates the strength of a divine life through them, and stamps the lively impressions of divine perfections upon them, rendering our hearts, wills, and ways, conformable to that glorious pattern, that infinite good, then do we enjoy a proper communion with him, and are truly blessed; though we are not completely blessed, till this conformity be perfected according to what those souls are, or may be capable of.

This is the true and proper notion of man's communion with God, and relation to him, which we cannot fully describe, till we more fully enjoy. That soul that truly lives and feeds upon God, does taste more than it can tell; and yet it can tell this, that this is the most high, excellent, noble, glorious life in the whole world.

This communion, as also the intimateness and closeness of it, are described variously in the Holy Scriptures, by the similitude of members being in the body; of branches being in the vine; by being formed according to God's image, changed into his image; by God's dwelling in the soul, and the soul in him; by Christ's being formed in the soul; by the soul's having Christ; by Christ's supping with the soul, and the soul with him. Because nothing is more our own, nor more

one with us, than that which we eat and drink, being incorporated into us ; therefore is this spiritual communion between God and the pious soul, oft-times in scripture described by our eating and drinking with him. Thus God was pleased to allow his people under the law, when they had offered up a part of their beasts in sacrifice to him, to sit down and feast upon the rest, as a token of that familiarity and oneness that was between him and them. By the like action, our Saviour shadowed out the same mystery, when, in the sacrament of his supper, he appointed them to sit down to eat and drink with him, to intimate their feeding upon him, and most close communion with him : yea, the state of glory, which is the most perfect communion with God, is thus shadowed out too, Matt. viii. 11. Rev. xix. 9. And, which is worth noting, I think the sacramental eating and drinking hath some reference to that most intimate communion of the saints with God in glory. Our Saviour himself seems to imply as much in that speech of his, Luke xxii. 30, “That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom :” in which words he seems plainly to allude to the sacramental eating and drinking which he had a little before instituted. Which makes some to believe that that gesture is to be retained in that ordinance, which is most proper and usual to express familiarity and communion ; and to take away that gesture, is to destroy one great end of our Saviour, in appointing this supper, which was to represent

that familiar communion which is between himself and every believing soul. I will not here examine the validity of their argument, which, possibly, if pressed home, might introduce a rudeness into the worship of God, under pretence of familiarity: but it seems very plain, that the nature of that ordinance doth shadow out the intimate communion between God and a pious soul.

I have already, in part, anticipated myself, and showed you wherein the soul's communion with God consists: but yet, to give you a more distinct knowledge of this great mystery, I shall unfold it in these three following particulars:—

1. “A pious soul hath communion with God in his attributes.” When the soul of man is moulded and formed into a resemblance of the divine nature, then hath it a true fellowship with him. Now, this communion with God in his attributes is to be seen two ways.

(1.) “When the soul is, in its measure, according to the capacity of a creature, all that which God is.” This is the communion which the angels have with God. Their beholding the face of God, is not to be understood of a mere speculation, or an idle gazing upon Deity; but they see him, by receiving his image upon themselves, and reflecting his glory and brightness; they partake of the goodness, purity, holiness, wisdom, righteousness of God, which makes them such glorious spirits; and the want of this makes the other, whom we call devils, to be

what they are. Thus, good men shall have communion with God, they shall see God. Yea, thus they have communion with him in some measure: they do not only see God in the world, as the devils do, or see him in the Word, as many hypocritical and wicked men do, but they see him in themselves, in the frame of their own souls; they find themselves moulded into his image, and a resemblance of him drawn upon them. This is a beatifical vision of God, true and real, though not full and complete. This is set out in scripture, by being "holy as God is holy," "perfect as God is perfect." This our Saviour exhorts us to seek after, "Take my yoke upon you, learn of me; for I am meek and lowly;" and the Apostle, "Be ye followers of God, as dear children." When the nature and perfections of God, his holiness, goodness, righteousness, wisdom, &c. are copied out upon our natures, and the same spirit is in us, which was in Christ Jesus, then have we a true communion with God, which blessed communion, when the soul becomes all that which God is, is by a conformity of nature.

(2.) "When the soul, in its actions as a creature, doth rightly answer to the attributes of the Creator." As when the soul doth answer the goodness of God with suitable affections of love and joy, and delight; when the soul doth correspond to the sovereignty and wisdom of God by the acts of self-denial and resignation; and doth converse with the righteousness of God by patience and a holy acquiescence. When

the soul doth rightly exert those acts which are proper and suitable to the nature of God, then it may be said to hold communion with him in his attributes; when the actions and motions of the soul do correspond to the divine nature and attributes. Now, this suitableness of the soul, I mean especially with reference to the incommunicable attributes of God, where there is no place for imitation, though it hold good in the rest also.

2. "A pious soul hath communion with God in his word." To read, profess, or hear his word, is not to hold a communion with God therein: many do so that are strangers to God: a man may read my letters, and yet correspond with my enemy. That son, in the gospel, that heard his father's command, and answered, "I go, sir," but went not, had no right communion with his paternal authority. But when the soul is ennobled into such a frame as this word doth require, then it holds communion with God in his word; for example, when the soul puts forth those acts of humiliation, holy fear and reverence, godly trembling, which do suit the nature of a divine threatening; when the soul answers the command of God with suitable resolutions, repentings, reformations, and real obedience; when it entertains the promise with suitable acts of holy delight, joy, refreshment, recumbency, and acquiesces in the same, then doth it truly converse with God in his Word.

3. "A pious soul hath communion with God in

his works." And that is, when the soul doth answer the several providences of God with suitable and pertinent affections and dispositions. The pious soul doth not only eye and observe the hand of God in all things that fall out, but doth comply with those providences, and is moulded into that frame, and put upon those duties, which such providences do call for. Then doth the soul rightly hold communion with God in his works, when it is humbled under humbling providences, is refreshed, strengthened, and grows up under prosperous providences, as they did, Acts ix. 31, who having rest given them, were edified, comforted, multiplied, &c. When the soul doth rightly comport with every providence, and the will is moulded into the will of God, then do we hold communion with him in his works. This theme is large, because the works of God are manifold, of creation, redemption, preservation, works towards other men, and towards ourselves, both towards our outward and inward man. A pious soul hath communion with God in all these; in the sense that I named even now, though perhaps not equally in all, yet sincerely and truly.

By what hath been said, you understand that right fellowship with God is not a bare communion of names. To have the name of God called upon us, and to be called Christians, or the people of God, or to name the name of God, to profess it, to cry, Lord, Lord, doth not make any one really and truly the better man, doth not make a soul rightly

happy. It is not enough to cry, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord," with those in Jer. vii. 4, to make our "boast in the law," with those in Rom. ii. 23, to call ourselves "the children of Abraham," as the Jews did in John the Baptist's time, Matt. iii. 9. These privileges and professions are extrinsical to the soul, and do nothing to the true ennobling of it. But right fellowship with God is a communion of hearts and natures, of will and affections, of interest and ends; to have one heart and will, the same interest and ends with God, is to be truly godly: a God-like man is the only godly man; a Christ-like nature brought into the soul, doth only denominate a man a true Christian. It is not speaking together, but loving and living together, that brings God and the soul into one: "I live, yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me." And thus, I suppose, you have a fair account why the Apostle James, chap. ii. does so much prefer works before faith, (for indeed faith is nothing worth, save only that faith which joins the soul to the object, and makes the thing believed one's own,) as also, why the Apostle prefers love before a faith of miracles, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. Though, indeed, a justifying faith is the most admirable, that faith which unites the soul and God together is more excellent, and, indeed, more wonderful than the faith that removes mountains. When I consider the proper happiness and perfection of a soul, and the nature of this true blissful communion with God, I cannot but wonder

how it is possible, that men should take their communion with God to consist in an overly acquaintance with him, profession of him, performances to him. I am confident it is not possible, that men should have any true feeling of happiness in such acquaintance, any more than a man can be really filled with the seeing or craving of meat which he eats not.

Before I apply the doctrine, give me leave to lay down some rules or positions, tending further to explain and clear it.

1. This must be held, which I touched upon before, that "there can be no communion between God and man, but by a likeness of nature, a new, a divine principle planted in the soul." A beast hath no communion with a man, because reason, the ground of such communion, is wanting. Of all the creatures, there was none found that could be a help meet for Adam, that could be taken into the human society, till Eve was made, who was a human person. So, neither can there be any conjunction of the soul with God, but by oneness of spirit, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit."

2. "There can be no communion with God but by a mediator," and no mediator but Christ Jesus, who is God-man. "Two cannot walk together," nor hold communion, "except they be agreed; and there can be no agreement made between God and man but by Christ Jesus. Therefore it is said, "Our communion is with the Father and the Son,"

with the Father by the Son: and faith, whereby the soul and God are united, is still said to be "faith in Christ," as we find in the scriptures.

3. "There can be no perfect communion with God in this life." Our communion with heaven, whilst we are upon earth, is imperfect; our resemblance to God is scant and dark in comparison of what it shall be. We know but in part, love but in part, enjoy but in part; we are but in part holy and happy. There can be no perfect communion with God, till there be a perfect reconciliation of natures as well as persons; and that cannot be whilst there is anything unlike to God in the soul, whilst any impure thing dwells in the soul which cannot truly close with God, nor God with that. The Holy Spirit can never suffer any defiled thing to unite itself with it: "It is not lawful for any impure thing to mix itself with pure divinity," saith Socrates the heathen. "What communion hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" saith the Apostle; and so far as a righteous man is in any part unrighteous, so far is he a stranger to God. The unregenerate part of a regenerate man hath no more communion with God than a wicked man, than the devil himself hath; no more than darkness hath with light.

4. "Our communion with God must be distinguished from the sense and feeling of it." Many have run upon sad miscarriages, (and those indeed extremes,) whilst they place communion with God

in the sense and feeling of it, in raptures of joy, ecstasies and transports of soul; which, indeed, if they be real, are not so much it, as the flower of it, something resulting and separable from it. Communion with God cannot be lost in a saint, for then he is no saint; for it is the proper characteristic of a saint to have communion with God; and a saint under desertion, hath communion with God even then as really, though not so feelingly as at any other time, so far as he is sanctified. But the sense of this communion may be very much, if not altogether lost, and oftentimes is lost.

5. "A soul's communion with God cannot be interrupted by any local mutations." It is a spiritual conjunction, and is not violated by any confinement; the walls of a prison cannot separate God and the pious soul; banishment cannot drive a soul from God. The blessed angels, those ministering spirits, when they are despatched into the utmost ends of the world upon the service of God, are even then beholding the face of God, and do enjoy as intimate communion with him as ever. The case is the same with all pious souls, whose communion with God does not depend upon any local situation; it is not thousands of miles that can beget a distance between God and the soul. Indeed nothing but sin does it, or can do it. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God;" nothing but sin is contrary to this divine fellowship, and so nothing but that can interrupt this spiritual so-

ciety. To speak properly, sin does not so much cause the soul's distance from God, as itself is that distance. Man and wife remain one, though at a hundred miles' distance; and believing souls do maintain a certain spiritual communion one with another, though in several parts of the world. The society and communion of pious souls one with another, so far as it is spiritual, cannot be interrupted by bodily distance; much less, then, the fellowship of God with the pious soul, who carries about with him, and in him, a divine nature, the image of God, a holy, God-like disposition whithersoever he goes.

¶6. "This communion with God which I have been speaking of, is much better than all outward acts and enjoyments, duties and ordinances whatsoever, though they be ever so many or specious." God himself long since decided this matter, that a broken and contrite heart is better than all sacrifices, Psalm li. 17; that to obey was better than sacrifice, 1 Sam. xv. 22; that mercy was better than sacrifice, Hosea vi. 6; that to do justly, love mercy, and to walk humbly with God, was to be preferred before "thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil," Micah vi. 7, 8. It holds in reference to gospel duties, though they may seem more spiritual than the oblations of the law. A real soul-communion with God, a communion of hearts and natures, of wills and affections, of interests and ends, is infinitely more excellent than all hearing, praying, celebration of Sabbaths or sacraments, James

i. 25, as the end is more excellent than the means : for so stands the case between them.

Yea, I will add, (though some proud and wanton spirits have made strange work with it, yet) it is a sure and most excellent doctrine, that this spiritual communion is a continual sabbath, (a sabbath of communion is much better than a sabbath of rest ;) this is the sabbath that the angels and saints in heaven keep, though they know no such thing as a first day in the week, have no reading, preaching, or praying, amongst them. This is a continual praying, and effectual way of praying in silence. A right active appropriating faith, does virtually contain a prayer in it ; right believing is powerful praying. The knees, eyes, and tongues, bear the least share in prayer, the whole of the work lies upon the soul, and particularly upon faith in the soul, which is indeed the life and soul of prayer. Faith can pray without words ; but the most elegant words, the phrase of angels, is not worthy to be called prayer without faith. I speak not so much of faith inditing a prayer, or giving life to it, as of its being virtually prayer, if not something more ; for, indeed, faith is a real bringing down of that God, and drawing in of those influences into the soul, which prayer only looks up for.

Communion with God is a continual fast ; it is that spiritual and most excellent way of fasting, whereby the soul, emptying itself of itself, and all self-fulness, self-sufficiency, self-confidence, receives

of the fulness of God alone, and is filled therewith. A soul communing rightly with God, is a soul emptied of, and, as it were, fasting from itself; which is the most excellent way of fasting.

It is a continual thanksgiving; and indeed the best way of thanksgiving in the world. To render up ourselves to God purely and entirely, to reflect the glory of God in a holy and God-like temper, is a real and living thank-offering. This is that hallelujah, so much spoken of, which the angels and saints in glory do sing perpetually: what other adjunct of it there may be, I will not here dispute.

This communion of hearts and wills is a constant and most excellent celebration of sacraments. The soul that is really baptized into the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, and feeds upon God, and is one with him, keeps a continual sacrament; without which, the sacramental eating and drinking is but a jejune and dry devotion. In a word, it is not possible for anything that is extrinsical to the soul to make it happy; but the soul that is advanced into the noble state of communion with God, is made partaker of a new nature, and is truly happy.

Nay, further, I will add, that this communion with God is not only better than all duties and ordinances, but even better than all revelations, evidences, discoveries that can be made or given to the soul from without; a manifestation of God, that is, of a divine life in the soul, is much better than such a manifestation as Moses had of his glory in the

cleft of the rock, *Exod. xxxiv.* Many say, O if we might but be assured of the love of God, of the pardon of sin, of an interest in Christ, we should be happy ! why, I will tell you, if you had a voice from heaven, saying that ye were the beloved children of God, as Christ had ; an angel sent from God to tell you that ye were beloved and highly favoured of God, as his mother Mary had, yet were communion with God to be preferred before these : for these things could not make a soul happy without real communion with God, but communion with God can and doth make a soul happy without these : and to this purpose, I suppose, I may apply that famous speech of our Saviour's by way of allusion, "It is more blessed to give, than to receive," to give up one's self, one's heart, will, interests, and affections, to God, than to receive any external discoveries and manifestations from him. Why do we so earnestly seek after signs from without us, of God's presence with us, as if there were anything better or more desirable to the soul than Immanuel, God with us, or, as the Apostle speaks, "Christ in us the hope of glory ?" He that desires any other evidence of grace, but more grace, does not only light up a candle to see the sun by, but indeed he acts like one that thinks there is something better than God himself ; though I do not say that all do think so who are covetous of such manifestations. But this I will say, and you may do well to meditate upon it, that holy longings after a true and spiritual

communion with God, do certainly spring from a divine principle in the soul; whereas a thirst after assurance of God's love, and reconciliation of our persons with him, may be only the fruit of self-love and interest.—“Let me die the death of the righteous!” you know whose wish it was.

7. “Though communion with God do concern the whole soul, and all the faculties, affections and motions of it,” it is God's spreading his influences, and exercising his sovereignty over all the powers of the soul, and their mutual spending of themselves upon him, and conforming to him, “yet the great acts of the soul, whereby it chiefly holds communion with God, are loving and believing.” Love is the joining and knitting of the soul to God; faith is the soul's labouring after more intimate conjunction with him, a drawing in influences from him, and participations of him into the soul. We may say that faith fetches in supplies from heaven, and love enjoys them; faith draws in sweetness and virtue from Christ, and love feeds upon it. Certainly these two eminent graces grow, live, and thrive together, and are inseparable companions. It is somewhat difficult to distinguish them, or to assign to each its proper place and work in the soul; they seem mutually to act, and to be mutually acted on by each other; perhaps the Apostle might have respect to this mystery, when he speaks so doubtfully, Gal. v. 6, “Faith which worketh by love,” which words may signify either ‘faith acting by love,’ or ‘faith

acted on by love.' We know, indeed, that in the state of perfect communion, which we call glory, love shall abide and flourish more abundantly, and there shall be no room for faith there, as to the principal acts of it; but which of them hath the greater part in maintaining our communion with God in this world, is not easy, nor indeed needful to determine. The pious soul is the most proper temple wherein God dwelleth, according to that, "Ye are the temple of the living God:" faith and love are the Jachin and Boaz, the two great pillars which keep up the soul as a temple; take away these and it remains a soul indeed, but the soul does not remain a temple to the Lord. In a word, these two are the soul's principal handmaids which she useth about this blessed guest; faith goes out and brings him in, and love entertains him; by faith she finds him whom she seeks, and by love she kisses him whom she finds, as the spouse is described, Cant. viii. 1.

8. "The communion that is between God and the pious soul is altogether different from that communion that is between creatures." Here I might show you how it exceeds and excels that, in many respects: but I shall not insist upon any of those particulars, nor indeed upon any of those many differences that are between them, save only upon this one: The communion that is between creature and creature is perfect in its kind, and so, consequently, gives mutual satisfaction; I mean, it terminates the expectations, so that nothing remains to be enjoyed

in them more than what is enjoyed. The creature is shallow, and soon is fathomed, we soon come to the bottom of it: a finite can grasp a finite being, and enjoy it, as I may say, all at once. A man may come so near to his friend, that he can come no nearer, enjoy him as fully as he is capable to enjoy, or the other to be enjoyed: created sweetness may be exhausted to the very bottom. But the soul's communion with God does not give it any such satisfaction, though indeed, in some sense, it gives a satisfaction of a much higher and more excellent kind. I told you before, that the soul's communion with God is imperfect in this life; and therefore it must needs follow, that it cannot satisfy; that is, not terminate and fill up the desires of it. Communion with God is maintained by faith and love, which proves it to be very sweet; but it also admits of hope, which proves it to be not satisfactory; for where there is yet any place left for hope, there is no full or satisfactory enjoyment. This may serve as a certain mark, whereby to judge of the truth of that communion with God; it is not glutting to the soul, but will certainly manifest itself in incessant hungering, poor in the midst of riches; the soul is in the midst of plenty, and yet cries out, as if it were ready to starve for want. When I consider the temper of some perfectionists, who cry down duties and ordinances, as low and unprofitable rudiments, and boast of their full and inaccessible attainments, and compare it with the temper of the

great Apostle, who did not reckon that he had attained, but still followed after that he might apprehend, who forgot the things that were behind, and reached forth unto those things that were before, pressing towards the mark, &c. I am ready to cry out, either this man is not an Apostle, or these men are not what they pretend; but an Apostle he was, and had intimate communion with his Lord; and therefore, I confess, I cannot allow these men so high a place, in my opinion, as they have in their own. God is infinite; and, therefore, though the soul be ever grasping, yet it can never comprehend; the soul however finds him to be infinitely good, and so cannot cease grasping at him either. The pious soul sees that there is yet much more to be enjoyed of God, and in him; and, therefore, though it be very near to him, yet cries out, and complains of its distance from him;—"Oh when shall I come and appear before him!" though it be united to him, yet it longs to be still more one with him, and to be in a closer conjunction. The pious soul forgets, with Paul, what it hath received, not through disingenuity and unthankfulness, but through a holy ardour and covetousness: all that he hath of God seems little, because there is yet so much to be had. Though the pious soul do drink of the fountain, yet that is not enough, it would lie down by it; though it do lie down by it, yet it is not satisfied either, except it may bathe itself, and even be swallowed up therein. Behold a paradox! the pious soul is most thirsty,

though, according to Christ's promise, it thirsts no more: it is most restless, though, according to his promise, it have rest. It is proper to God alone to rest in his love, for the creature cannot in this imperfect state: by this we know that we are not yet in heaven; for it is a state of perfect rest, not sloth, or cessation, but satisfaction. Faith is the fever of the soul, rendering it more thirsty by how much the more it drinks in of the water of life, the living streams that flow forth from the throne of God and of the Lamb. As the waters of the sanctuary are described by the prophet, growing deeper and deeper, Ezek. xlvii. so hope, which is the soul's appetite, grows larger and larger, and cannot be satisfied till the soul's capacity be filled up.

The doctrinal part being thus briefly despatched, it will be easy to infer some things by way of corollary. I shall content myself with three only amongst many.

1. "All wicked men are strangers to God." We know, indeed, that God, according to his infinite essence, is present with all his creatures; not only men, but even devils too, have their being in him: he hath spread his omnipotence, as the foundation whereupon the whole creation doth stand; he reared up the world in himself, and in him it doth subsist at this day. However angels and men have sadly fallen from God, yet they may be truly said to live in him still; and although all wicked souls do straggle off from God, as to their dispositions and

affections, ingrafting themselves into another stock by sin and wickedness, yet they cannot possibly straggle from him as to their subsistence, as the Apostle teaches the Athenian philosophers, "He is not far from every one of us," though few feel after him or find him. And it may be truly said, in some sense, that all the creatures, yea, the very worst of them, have a communion with God; all partake of him; no creature hath anything of its own really distinct from him. Every thing that hath a being, hath a relation to that infinite and Supreme Being; and every living thing may be rightly said to have communion with him who is life itself. And all those several excellencies that are in the creatures, flow out from God, who hath impressed various prints of his own beauty and perfection upon every thing that he hath made. God's making of a thing is no other than the communicating of himself thereunto. And, therefore, when you look into the world, do not view any creature in the narrow point of its own being, but in the unbounded essence of God, and therein love and admire it. But, upon the immortal soul of man, God hath copied out his divine perfections more clearly and gloriously, than upon any other creature in this world. God could not make a rational soul, without communicating of his own infinite wisdom, power, life, freedom to it; so that there is more of the divine nature to be seen in the understanding and will of any one man, than in the whole fabric of heaven and earth.

Notwithstanding this, wicked men are strangers to God. They live and move in God indeed, but they know it not, they consider it not; they act as if they had no dependence upon him, no relation to him. Though they have some kind of communion with God, as creatures, yet this makes them not at all happy: for they are departed from God in their affections and dispositions; they have degenerated from that subserviency and subordination to the divine will, which is the proper perfection of the creature, and are “alienated from the life of God,” as the Apostle speaks. It is not the soul’s moving in God, that makes it truly and happily nigh unto him, but its moving towards God, as the chief object, and according to the will of God, as the chief rule; and therefore wicked men, who pitch upon other objects, and walk by other laws, even the lusts and ordinances of their own flesh and fancy, are properly strangers to God, and miserable. He is not properly said to know God, who hath a notion of him formed in his head, but he whose heart and will are moulded into a conformity to God, and a delight in him; so that a wicked man though he know, and believe, and tremble, as much as any of the devils, yet not loving nor delighting in God, as his chief good, not being conformed to his image, as the highest and purest perfection, may be truly said to be estranged from him; which is a state of hell, and death, and darkness. This is the man, who, though not in words, yet, interpretatively, and really,

saith unto God, "Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways," with them in Job xxi. 14. These do really exempt themselves from the dominion of Christ, and do really, though not audibly, say with them in the gospel, "We will not have this man to reign over us." However men pretend, and boast of their relation to, and acquaintance with God, certainly all that live a mere sensual life, non-conformists to the image of God, are truly said to be strangers to him, and in a state of non-communion with him, 1 John i. 6; 2 Cor. vi. 14.

2. "The life of a true Christian is the most high and noble life in the world;" it exceeds the life of all other men, even of the greatest men. The character that is here given of the good man is the highest that can be given of any man, or indeed of any creature. It is the highest glory and excellency of the creature, to partake of the life of God, of the perfections of the Creator; and such is the description that the Spirit of God here makes of the religious man. What an unreasonable and senseless reproach is that which this wicked world doth cast upon religion, calling it a low and despicable thing; and upon religious and pious men, calling them low-spirited, silly people. Can a man be better spirited, than with the Spirit of God? Can anything more truly ennoble a soul than a divine nature? Can a man be raised any higher than unto heaven itself? So noble is the godly soul. "The way of life is above to the wise;" and, consequently,

all wicked men lead a low life, and are bound under chains of death and darkness: the righteous man is of a high and divine original, born of God, born from above; and therefore is more excellent than his neighbour, than any of his neighbours, even a king himself being judge, Prov. xii. 26. What a hellish baseness is that sinful gallantry of spirit, what a brutishness is that sensuality of living, which the degenerate sons of Adam do so much magnify! True goodness and excellency of spirit must be measured by the proportion that it bears to the Supreme Good, the infinite pattern of all perfection. What excellent persons were those renowned saints of old, of whom the Apostle says, that "the world was not worthy," however they were thought not worthy to live in the world! What a noble and generous spirit of true christian valour, patience, meekness, contempt of the world, and self-denial, was that, which was to be seen in the blessed apostles, however they were esteemed as the filth and sweepings of the world, the "offscouring of all things!" To which of the noble, wise, mighty men of the world, as such, did God ever say, 'These are the men that have fellowship with me, these are the men that lead a noble and divine life? No, no, "not many noble are called;" and when they are called, they are made more noble than ever they were by birth or descent, by places of preferment or command. The life of every wicked man, of what rank soever he be in the world, is but a low life, a

life in most things common to the very beasts with him; if the main of his business and delight be to eat, and drink, and work, and sleep, and enjoy sensual pleasures, what doth he? what enjoyeth he more than the beasts that perish? But the life of the meanest soul, that hath true and spiritual communion with God, is a life common to him with the blessed angels, those sons of the morning, the flower of the whole creation. That life which hath self for its centre, must needs be a penurious, and indeed a painful life: for how can the soul of man possibly feed to the full upon such spare diet, such scant fare as it finds at home? Nay, indeed, how can it choose but be in pain and torture, whilst it stretcheth itself upon self-sufficiency, or creature fulness, which is not at all commensurate to it? But the soul that rightly stretches and spends all its faculties upon the infinite and blessed God, finds all its capacities filled up to the brim with that fountain of goodness, and itself perfectly matched with a suitable and satisfactory object. This is the true and only nobleness of spirit, when all the powers and faculties of this immortal soul are exalted and advanced into a true and vital sympathy and communion with the chief Good, formed according to his will, conformed to his image.

And O that wisdom might be more “justified of her children!” O that the life of God did but clearly manifest itself, and shine forth in the lives of those that call themselves Christians! Alas, that ever

God himself should suffer reproach, by reason of the low-spiritedness and laziness of his servants ! For this cause is religion evil spoken of. The Lord awake and enable us to express and show forth the divine life with all power and vigour, to live as high as the calling wherewith we are called, and so roll away this reproach !

3. "The life of a Christian is not a heavy sluggish thing, but active and vigorous," as the phrase 'communion with God,' imports. Religion is a communication of life and vigour from Him, who is life itself; which makes the truly God-like soul to be quick and powerful in its motions. Every thing is by so much the swifter and stronger in its motions, by how much the nearer it is to its centre, as philosophy tells us. Certainly by how much the nearer any man is gotten to God, who is the centre of souls, by so much the more does he covet after more intimate communion with him, and the more eagerly lay hold upon him. Communion does necessarily imply re-action or reflection: the soul that receives of God, and his fulness, will certainly be emptying itself into him again. Communion, in the very force of the phrase, implies a mutualness; we cannot suppose a soul partaking of God, but it must needs mutually render up itself to him again. There can be no commerce nor correspondence without returns: but what return can the pious soul make unto God? Why, it renders up its whole self to him. Faith is a giving grace as well as a

receiving, it gives the soul back to Christ, as well as takes Christ into the soul; it draws in strength and grace from God, and reciprocally spends the whole powers of the soul upon him. The happiness of a real Christian doth not consist in cessation and rest; the soul itself being a powerful and active being, the happiness of it, the very rest of it, must also be active and vigorous. Where there is communion, there must needs be quick and lively returns, reciprocations; reflections, and correspondencies; the drawings of God are answered with the soul's running. The motion of Christ's fingers begets a motion in the Christian's soul: "My Beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him." These are the divine and harmonious responses which are made and maintained in the godly soul, the temple of the living God. O shake off that lazy and drowsy spirit, which hath so benumbed many in this cold and stupid age of the world; work out your salvation with care and diligence. If your religion be nothing but a spiritual kind of sleep, your heaven will prove to be nothing but a pleasant kind of dream.

Communion with God speaks something divine, active, vigorous. The life of a Christian doth not consist only in cessation from evil, reformation from sin, or dying thereunto; mortification is but one part of regeneration. It is the conceit, and, I doubt, the deceit, of many nominal Christians, that if they

can but keep up an indifferent even spirit and conversation, free from gross and scandalous sins from day to day, they are happy enough; their utmost ambition is to be innocent and harmless. This indeed is necessary and praiseworthy; but surely the happiness of a soul lies higher: thus happy are all the creatures that keep in the station, and keep up the order prescribed them of God: thus happy is the sun in the firmament, running its race continually, and never departing from the office which is assigned to it. But the soul of man is capable of a higher kind of happiness, namely, Communion with God; which is, when the faculties thereof being awakened, refined, and acted on by the Spirit of God, do reciprocally act, and spend themselves upon him, longing to be perfectly swallowed up in him, and to be all that which God himself is, as far as the creature is capable to drink in the perfections of the Creator, and become one with his Maker. This is that truly noble and divine life, which is here called communion with God, which the high-spirited and generous soul labours yet more and more to be growing up into, and perfected in. Keep yourselves, with David, from your iniquities; it is something to be freed from the guilt and power of sin; but there is somewhat higher than this, a more excellent attainment, a more divine accomplishment: go on therefore with the same David, and aspire after this pure and blissful state, this heaven upon earth, waiting for the more ample and glorious manifesta-

tions of God to you and in you, more than they that watch for the morning, as he did. This inference was only of instruction, but the sweetness and needfulness of the subject almost prevails with me to turn it into an earnest exhortation, but that I would not anticipate myself. Therefore I proceed to the next way of improving this doctrine, which shall be by way of conviction or reprehension.

1. Our fellowship *is*—it reproves them that can take up with a *shall be*—a heaven to come. I am now speaking, not to the worst of men, whose very souls are swallowed up in sensual enjoyments, and imprisoned in their senses: for these men either think of no heaven at all, or else they place their heaven and happiness in the enjoyment of themselves or of the creature. Nor yet do I speak to those men who, being persuaded of a future state, do indeed wish for a heaven to come, but then it is a poor kind of low and earthly heaven, consisting in ease, rest, safety, freedom from troubles or torments, which is the best happiness which most men understand, the highest heaven that any carnal mind can see or soar up to. But I am speaking to a better and finer sort of souls than these, that are verily possessed with a sense of a pure and spiritual heaven in the world to come; yea, they are so overpowered with the foresight of it, as that they do earnestly expect and wish for it; yea, the hopes of it do sustain and strengthen their hearts under the manifold temptations and persecutions of this pre-

sent world; they are so verily persuaded of the truth of it, and of their own title to it too, that they are content to abide this long and disconsolate night of dimness, and anguish, and frightfulness, merely in expectation of the dawning of that day, that clear and bright day of their glorious and everlasting redemption. And herein I am far from blaming them, nay, I must needs commend their magnanimous faith and self-denial. But, in the mean time, they dwell too much upon heaven as a future state, and comfort themselves only in a happiness to come, not longing and labouring to find a heaven opened within themselves, a beginning of eternal bliss brought into themselves: they are too well content with a certain reversion, and do not eagerly enough endeavour after present possession, to be actually instated in so much of the inheritance of souls as may fall to their share even in this lower world; this slothful temper and inactivity I do condemn wherever it is found; yea, though it be in my own soul. Every thing in the world, by a natural principle, thirsts after its proper rest, and a happiness suitable to the nature of it; no creature can be content, though it may be constrained, to be at a distance from its centre, but is still carried out towards its own perfection. And why then should a pious soul, who is God's only new creature in the world, be content with a state of imperfections? why should not he as eagerly covet, and as earnestly pursue the most intimate and close communion and conjunction with

his God, as they do with their respective centres? Can any earthly, sensual, unregenerate man be content with an inheritance in reversion, so as to suspend his minding and following of the world till hereafter? Can any ambitious spirit, who places his main happiness and contentment in popular estimation, and worldly greatness, be content to stand gazing at preferments; will he be willing to sit still, and wait till they drop into his mouth? No, no, there is a raging thirst in the soul, which will not suffer it to be at rest, but is still awakening and provoking all the powers of the whole man, till they arise and fetch in water to quench it. And therefore we read of men making haste to be rich, and hastening after another god; which eager and ardent passions towards earthly objects, you may see lively described in the instances of Ahab, Amnon, and Haman, in the holy scriptures. And is there any reason to be given, why that new nature and divine principle which God putteth into regenerate souls, should not carry them as hastily and forcibly to a present fruition of their proper object and happiness, (so far as at present it may be enjoyed) as that corrupt and degenerate nature doth hurry on those in whom it ruleth, towards the satisfaction of their brutal lusts? Divines speak sometimes of making heaven and eternal life present to ourselves, and say that this is the work of faith; which is a high and excellent doctrine, but, I doubt, not thoroughly understood by ordinary Christians. To make heaven

present to one's self, is not only to insist upon a state of future happiness in frequent meditations, to think much of it, neither is this that noble employment of saving faith; but the life and power of faith is most eminently exerted in drawing in participations of life and grace from Christ, and in a real bringing down of God and heaven into the soul. The truth is, heaven is a state of perfect communion with God, a state of love, joy, peace, purity, freedom; and as far as any soul is in such a state upon earth, so far he is above the earth, and may be said to be in heaven. Therefore a right active soul, that truly understands its proper and spiritual heaven and happiness, so far as he is thus active and sensible, cannot be content to stay for all his happiness till the world to come; cannot be content to be unhappy, no, not for an hour, but is still growing up in God, and springing up into everlasting life.

2. It reprehends those that make a stir about the kingdom of Christ in the world, and men's being brought into the communion of the church, but advance not his kingdom in their own souls, nor long to have their own souls advanced into that noble state of communion with "the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." There is, doubtless, a generation of such popular Christians, who, being strangers to the life, and power, and spirit of true religion, do endeavour to pass off themselves on the world, and commend themselves to the charity of their brethren, by a pretended zeal for the kingdom of Christ in the

world, and the glorious manifestation of it, as they speak. I know, indeed, that it is worthy the cares, and prayers, and utmost diligence of every serious Christian, to spread and propagate the knowledge of the gospel, to pour out the ointment of Christ's name far and near. A more pure and spiritual administration of all gospel ordinances throughout the world is highly desirable; yea, and I think an indifferent and careless disposition towards the worship of God argues much of an earthly and atheistical mind. But I fear that kingdom of Christ, and those glorious manifestations and discoveries which are so much pretended to by many, if they should be thoroughly examined, would be, at length, resolved into nothing else but the advancement of some one party or interest above all the rest, or the exchanging of an old form or dress of religion for a new one; and that this zeal would be found little better than the blazings of self-love, a fire kindled not by a coal from the altar, but by a spark of their own. But, be it so, that this disposition of theirs is sincere and spiritual; should not this charity begin at home? The most proper kingdom of Christ is that whereby he ruleth in the hearts of men; the most excellent worship is when the soul itself becomes a temple for the living God to dwell in, and to receive and reflect the manifestations of his glory; when a fire of divine love is kindled in it, and therein it doth offer up, not bulls and goats, no, nor prayers and meditations, so much as itself unto God; which

is a reasonable service, as the Apostle speaks, far more glorious than either the Mosaical or Evangelical dispensation, if you consider it in the letter only. Whatever men may pretend, no man can be truly and rightly studious of the advancement of the kingdom of God in the world, that hath not first felt the mighty power and blessed effects of it in his own soul. Communion with the church is only so far to be valued, as it is in order to a real and spiritual communion with God; which communion with God, if we do indeed sincerely wish to others, we shall more abundantly labour to promote in ourselves. I cannot believe that he doth heartily seek the happiness of others, who himself sits still, and is content to be miserable, especially when their happiness and his is one and the same.

3. It condemns them as not Christians, whose fellowship is only with their fellow-creatures. We have seen that it is the character, the distinguishing character of a pious man, to have fellowship with God. It must needs follow, then, that those degenerate souls that rise no higher than the world, that converse only with self or any other creature, are verily strangers to true Christianity, whatever their confidence or presumption may be. Christians, tell not me what you profess of Christ, what you believe of the gospel, what orthodox opinions you hold, what an honest party you side with; how many and specious duties you perform, no, nor what hopes or wishes you have of going to heaven; but, tell me,

where is your principal communion ; what do you mainly mind, follow, converse with ; what pattern do you conform to ; what rule do you live by ; what object do you ultimately aim at ? The whole world of worldly men doth hasten after another god, as the Psalmist phrases it, though not all after the same god : they spend their souls, indeed, upon various objects, and use different methods to obtain rest, but yet all their happiness and contentment is ultimately resolved into creature-communion. That dreadful sentence, which the Apostle delivers universally concerning all men, is to be limited to all wicked men only, and of them it is undoubtedly true : “ All seek their own, and none the things of Jesus Christ.” And, of all these, that of the Psalmist’s “ many” is to be understood : “ There be many that say, Who will show us any good ?” that is, any creature-good, as the words following do explain it. All unregenerate souls are bound up in the creature, some creature or other ; and therefore the noblest of them, whatever boasting they may make, are low and ignoble ; their main converse is but with their fellow-creatures, and indeed creatures much inferior to themselves : “ Corn and wine,” says the Psalmist ; “ earthly things,” says the Apostle,—“ who mind earthly things.” In a word, though it be true what the Apostle says in one place, that all men in the world do live in God, yet it is also true, that most of men, as the same Apostle speaks elsewhere, do “ live without God in the world,” have their

hearts staked down to one creature or other, and so fall short of this honourable character which the Apostle here gives of good men: "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

And now I shall conclude the remainder of this discourse, with a humble request, and earnest expostulation.

"Reckon not upon any happiness below this communion." There are many things which a Christian may take to be comforts; but only one, this one, that he ought to take to be the happiness of his life. I design not to speak anything to the prejudice of natural or civil ornaments or accomplishments, much less to the disparagement of any of those endowments or employments which are, in a sense, spiritual, commonly called gifts and duties: but, I must confess, it is one of the great wonders of the world to me, to see such a noble and intelligent being, as the soul of man is, attending to, and pursuing after, things either extrinsical or inferior to itself, in the mean time carelessly forgetting, or wilfully rejecting its main happiness, principal end, and proper perfection. As for those sensual persons, those mere animals, whose souls are incarnate in their senses, and seem to perform no higher office in the world than the souls of beasts, that is, to carry about their bodies; who value themselves by their bodies, or, which is baser, by the apparel that clothes them,

or the estates that feed them: I shall not now trouble myself about them, but leave them to be chastised by Seneca or Plutarch, or indeed any ordinary philosopher. I shall rather apply myself a little to a sort of higher spirited people, whom by a condescension of charity we call Christians, who, valuing themselves by external professions, privileges, performances, may indeed be said to be somewhat more scrupulous and curious, but no less mistaken than the former: for if the grosser sort of sensualists do deny, and professedly abjure their own reason, and the finer sort of hypocrites do more cunningly bribe theirs, each method amounts to no more than a cheat, and both parties will be alike miserable, save that the latter will be somewhat more tormented in missing a happiness which he looked and hoped for. It is not proper to my present discourse, to speak so highly and honourably of these externals of Christianity, nor to press them so zealously, as I do at all times when I have occasion; for I verily value all ordinances of Christ, and duties of God's worship, at a high rate; nay, I know not any serious and truly pious soul in the world, but is of this same opinion with me; but, I must confess, I think it is one of the greatest and most pernicious cheats in the world, for men to feed upon the dish instead of the meat, to place their happiness in those things which God hath only appointed to be means to convey it. This was the great destruction of the Jewish

church ; by this they perished : thus they are every where described in Scripture, as a people resting in their privileges and performances, boasting of their sacrifices and temple-service ; they made account of a strange kind of flesh-pleasing heaven, something distinct from them, and reserved for them, to be given them by way of reward for the righteousness which themselves had wrought by the power of their own free will (which free will, they say, is an effect of man's fall, but they make it a cause of man's rise ; for now he can purchase and merit a happiness, which happiness is also more illustrious than that given of mere grace ;) which righteousness, if we look either into their own writings, or God's writings concerning them, we shall find was nothing else but a strict observance of the precepts of the law, according to the letter and external dispensation of it. Such a low and legal spirit was generally found amongst the Jews ; I wish the greatest part of us, who are in profession and name evangelical, be not found as truly legal in spirit and temper as they were. If we cry the gospel of Christ, the gospel of Christ, with the same spirit, as they cried, "the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord," our confidence will as surely betray us into final misery as theirs did. True, indeed, prayers, sacraments, sermons, are somewhat finer words than the old obsolete ones, the law, sacrifices, ceremonies ; but, alas ! they are but words ;

at least they are not gods, not more fit to terminate our devotions and affections than these. I beseech you, therefore, Christians, be not mistaken in this matter. True Christianity is not a notion, but a nature; that is not religion which is wrapped up in books, or laid up in men's brains, but it is laid in the very constitution of the soul, a new principle implanted by God, in the highest powers of the soul, refining and spiritualizing all the faculties thereof, and rendering them as like to God himself, as such a creature can resemble its Creator. It is a truth, as clear as the sun is clear, that nothing can make a soul truly happy, but what is wrought into the nature of it, and that must be somewhat more excellent than itself, and be nothing less than something divine, even the image of the blessed God. If you be Christians, in deed and in truth, value all the ordinances of God, and the duties of the Christian religion, but value not yourselves by these, or your happiness by these. Attend upon them all for the maintaining and increasing of real fellowship with God; for though these be not it, yet they are the way wherein it pleases God to give it. Drink the sincere milk of the word, but let it be only with a holy design of growing thereby, of growing up into God, and a divine life. Away with those low and base thoughts of happiness; the happiness of a soul is a high and excellent, indeed a divine thing; it is

in some sense common to God and the soul; God is happy in himself alone, and the soul can only be happy in him. What contentment, what real happiness, Christian, can the rising of thy party in the world, or the rising of thy name in the country, bring thee, if, in the mean time, thou thyself harbourest any carnal will, self-interest that doth rise up in opposition to the pure and perfect will and nature of God? how art thou happy in thy prayers, if thou cast sin out of thy mouth, and, in the mean time, a fountain of iniquity be springing up in thy heart! What avails it towards a state of perfection, to be of the most orthodox opinions, the most honest society, the fairest profession, the most popular and sanctimonious form, or the most plausible performances either, the soul being, in the mean time, alienated from the life of God, and feeding upon some earthly trash or other, which destroys the native powers and vigour of it, and keeps it under a perpetual languor? even just so much as a silken stocking upon a gouty leg, or a princely diadem upon an aching head, avails towards a state of ease and soundness and good temperature of body. Let nothing limit your ambition, but a state of God-like perfection, let nothing set bounds to your loving and longing souls, but a real fruition of God himself; nay, let not that bound them either, but the more you enjoy, see, and taste, the more let your love be strengthened, after the manner of fire, which,

the more it is fed, the more hungry and devouring it grows. In a word, let nothing satisfy you lower than the highest character that can be given of mortal man, to be men "after God's own heart," to have God dwelling in you, to be filled with his fulness, to have this real and excellent "communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." To whom be all honour, praise, and glory, for ever and ever.

THE
ANGELICAL LIFE,
BY SAMUEL SHAW.

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THE ANGELICAL LIFE.

MATT. XXII. 30.

—“ *Are as the angels of God in heaven.*”

THE doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the great things of the christian religion, as they were accounted strange things by all the world when they were first published and preached, so indeed by none less entertained, or rather more opposed, than by the wisest of men living in that age, namely, Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, who were the “disputers of this world,” as the Apostle’s phrase is: a thing of wonderful observation, not only to us in our day, but even to our blessed Lord himself in the days of his flesh, who fetches the cause of it from heaven, and adores the infinite wisdom of God in it—“I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” Amongst other set disputations that the Sadducees held with our Saviour, the one in this

chapter is very famous ; where they dispute against the resurrection of the dead, by an absurd argument grounded upon an instance of a woman that had been married to seven husbands successively. Now, say they, if there be a resurrection, whose wife shall she be then ? Our Saviour answers by destroying the ground of their argument, and showing that they disputed upon a false supposition ; for, saith he, “ In the resurrection there shall be no marrying ; but men shall be as the angels of God.” In which words this doctrine is plainly laid down, (for I shall not meddle with the controversy,)

“ That the glorified saints shall be as the angels of God in heaven.” The other evangelists lay down the same truths, see Mark xii. 25, Luke xx. 36. In the explication of which point I will shew, I. Negatively, wherein the saints shall not be like the angels. II. Affirmatively, wherein the saints shall be like unto them, or, as St. Luke hath it, equal to them.

I. Negatively.

1. “ The glorified saints shall not be like the angels in essence.” The angelical essence, and the rational soul are, and shall be different. Souls shall remain souls still, keep their own essence : the essence shall not be changed ; souls shall not be changed into angelical essences.

2. “ They shall not be wholly spirits without bodies,” as the angels. The spirits of just men now made perfect, are more like to the angels in this

sense than they shall be after the resurrection ; for now they are spirits without bodies : but the saints shall have bodies, not such as now, corruptible, not in anything defective, not needing creature-supplies, but incorruptible, glorious bodies, in some sense spiritual bodies ; which are described by three characters—incorruptible, (somewhat more than immortal,) glorious, powerful. Neither doth their having bodies any whit abate their perfection or glory, nor render them inferior to the angels ; for even the glorious Redeemer of the world hath a body, who is yet superior to the angels ; and he shall change the vile bodies of the saints, and make them like unto his glorious body.

3. “ Neither have we any ground to believe that the saints shall be altogether equal to the angels in dignity and glory :” but rather, that as man was at first made a little lower than the angels, so that he shall never come to be exalted altogether so high as they ; for it seems, that the natural capacity of an angel is greater than of a man, and so shall continue, for they are a distinct kind of creatures. As a beast cannot become so wise and intelligent as a man, for then he would cease to be a beast ; so neither can a man become so powerful and capable as an angel, for then he would cease to be a man.

II. Affirmatively.

The glorified saints shall be like the angels of God in heaven, 1st. In their qualities ; that is,

1. “ In being pure and holy.” Whether they

shall be equal to them in positive holiness or not, I know not; whether they shall understand, and know, and love God, in all degrees, as much as the angels; it seems rather that they shall not, because, as I said before, their capacity shall not be so large. But if in this they be not altogether equal to the angels, yet it implies no imperfection; for they shall be positively holy, as far as their nature is capable; and so shall be perfect in their kind—"The spirits of just men made perfect:" they shall in this be like unto the angels, if not equal to them, yea, like unto God himself in it—"Be ye holy, as I am holy." But as to negative holiness, the saints shall be even equal to the angels of God in heaven, that is, they shall have no more sin, no more corruption than they have: they shall be as perfectly freed from all iniquities, imperfections, and infirmities, as the angels. What can be cleaner than that which hath no uncleanness at all in it? Why, so clean shall all the saints be—"No unclean thing shall enter into heaven." They shall be without all kind of spot or blemish, which is a perfect negative holiness; more cannot be said of the angels in this respect. As branches of this:—

2. "As the holy angels do reverence the divine Majesty; they cover their faces with their wings, crying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, so shall the glorified saints." You may see what sweet harmony they make, consenting together to give the glory of all to God. The saints stood and cried,

“Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb;” the angels stood round about, saying, “Amen, amen.”

3. “In their readiness to do the will of God, and execute his commands;” therefore the angels are described to have wings;—“with twain they did fly.” How God shall please to employ angels or saints in the world to come, is not for us to enquire; but they shall be alike ready to do his will, and serve his pleasure, whatever it shall be. Even whilst the saints are imperfect on earth, they can cry, “Here am I, send me:” how much more ready shall they be then, when all their fetters are knocked off!

4. They shall be as the angels, “in their cheerful and unwearied execution of the will of God.” So the angels are, and so shall the saints be. The spirit shall then be more willing, and the flesh shall be no more weak, as it is now; for when it is raised again, it shall be in power. More things of this nature might be added, but I pass lightly over them; because, although they be true, yet they are not principally looked at in this text: therefore I come to the second thing wherein the glorified saints shall be like unto the angels, and that is,

In their way of living. They shall be like the angels, that is, saith one truly, *ισαγγελως βιουντες*, living like the angels. How is that? our Saviour tells us, neither marrying, nor being given in marriage; it is added presently in Luke xx. 36, “For neither can they die any more.” If there be no

dying, there will be no need of propagation ; and if no need of propagation, then why should they marry ? The angels are single, and know no other conjunction but with God in a spiritual manner ; no more shall the saints. But what great matter is that to be like the angels in ? what perfection is that ? Many saints, yea, and sinners too upon earth, are so like the angels, nay, and the devils too. Therefore you must know that our Saviour under this phrase of not marrying, doth comprehend all manner of creature-converse, all kind of living upon, and delighting in the creature, by a synecdoche of the part, as is ordinary in scripture ; “ I have not given upon usury,” saith the prophet, “ yet the people curse me,” that is, I have had no dealing in the world, no negotiation. By one kind he understands the whole, Ezek. xxv. 4, where, by eating their fruits, and drinking their milk, is understood the possession of all that was theirs ; and in many other places the Spirit of God uses this tropical way of speaking.

The angels of God neither marry, nor are given in marriage, that is, they live not upon any created good, delight not in any created comfort, but live entirely upon God, converse with him, are everlastingly beholding his glory, and delighting themselves in him. Thus shall the glorified saints live for ever : their bodies shall not need nor use created supplies, food, physic, raiment, &c. which things in this animal state they stand in need of, Matt. vi. 32.

But that is not all: for their souls shall not any longer desire, nor hanker after any created thing, but, as the angels, shall be possessed of God, filled with the fulness of God; all their powers and faculties are perfectly refined and spiritualized, abstracted from all created things, eternally rejoicing and delighting themselves in the contemplation and participation of the supreme and infinite Good: for during this earthly and imperfect state, not only the bodies of good men feed upon, and are sustained by the creatures, in common with other men, but even their souls do taste too much of worldly contentments, and drink too deep of earthly pleasures and creature comforts: even the most refined souls upon earth, though they do not properly feed upon any thing below God, yet do oft dip the end of their rod in this honey that lies upon the earth, with Jonathan; do use their earthly enjoyments, and delight in them in a way too unspiritual, having abstracted them from God, and loving them with a distinct love. But in the resurrection it shall not be so; for the holy souls shall be perfectly conformed to the holy God, shall feed upon him singly, live upon him entirely, be wrapt up in him wholly, and be satisfied with him solely and everlastingly, and so shall they be equal to the angels. The creature, although it does not fill any truly sanctified soul upon earth, yet it hath some room there; but then it shall be perfectly cast out, and the soul shall be filled with all the fulness of God. The crea-

ture is now much in some pious souls, and something in all of them; but then it shall be nothing at all to them, or in them, but God shall be all in all, all things in all of them; as the way of the saints' living, and their glorified state is described—"that God may be all in all." "They shall inherit all things:" but how is that? why, see the explication of it in the following words, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God." God will be their God; God shall be unto them instead of all things. In that state there shall no need of sun or moon; by which excellent and useful creatures the whole creation seems to be understood; for they that shall live above the sun and moon, shall certainly live above all things that are below these: but how then? why it follows, "The glory of God shall enlighten them, and the Lamb shall be their light." "And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun: for the Lord giveth them light." All happiness is derived into them from God, and therefore there shall be no night, no want of any creature comfort to them; neither shall they desire anything more of the creature whether small or great, whether candle or sun. For explication of this their blessed life, let me allude to that of our Saviour—"The fowls of heaven neither sow nor reap, yet God feedeth them;" so the saints in heaven neither want nor desire any created good, for they feed upon God the supreme and infinite Good: and

again, “The lilies neither toil nor spin, and yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” These blessed souls have no respect at all to things terrene and created; yet they are so filled and adorned with the glory of the infinite Majesty, that Solomon in all his glory was nothing in comparison of them. In a word, the state of the glorified saints and angels is set out by our Saviour in the same manner, by one and the same description, and that is the seeing of God: the life of angels is called a continual beholding of the face of God, and the state of the saints’ glory and happiness is also a seeing of God—“They shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads.” Now, this phrase, the seeing of God, applied both to the saints and angels, doth place their happiness in God alone, excluding the creature; and it doth import the fullness and clearness, and certainty of their bliss.

Thus I have showed you, in what sense, though I am not able to show you in what degree, the glorified saints shall be like the angels of God in heaven: their way of living upon the blessed God alone, shall be the same with that of the holy angels.

APPLICATION.

From the discovery of the future state of the saints, I find myself furnished with reasons for,

1. Reproof against the carnal conceits that many Christians have of heaven. Christians do I call them! nay, herein they seem rather Mahometans,

who place heaven in the full and lasting enjoyment of all creature-comforts, nay, indeed of sinful and abominable pleasures, as one may read in their Alcoran. It may be, few Christians are altogether so sensual; but, sure I am, the far greater sort of Christians, so called, are very gross and carnal, at least, very low in their conceits of the state of future happiness. Heaven is a word as little understood as holiness; and that, I am sure, is the greatest mystery in the world. It would be tedious to run through the various apprehensions of men in this matter, and indeed impossible to know them. The common sort of people understand by heaven either just nothing but a glorious name, or at best but a freedom from bodily torment: as nothing of hell affects them but that dreadful word *fire*, so nothing of heaven but the comfortable word *rest* or *safety*. Others, it may be, think there is something positive in heaven, and they dream of an honourable, easy, pleasant life, free from such kind of toils, labours, pains, persecutions, reproaches, and penuries, which men are subject to in this life; this is a true notion, but much below the nature of that happy state. Others are yet more highly affected with the words of glory and glorious, and seem to be much ravished with them, but are like men in a maze or wonderment, who admire something that they understand not, and are altogether confounded in their own apprehensions of it; as if a man should be mightily taken with such a fine name as Arabia

the Happy, and by a blind fervour of mind should desire to go and visit it. Others rise yet higher in their apprehensions of heaven, and look upon it as a holy state, but that holiness is negative, a perfect freedom from sin, and all temptations to it: and indeed this is a precious consideration, and that wherein many a weary soul finds much rest: but yet this amounts not to the life of angels; it is a lower consideration of heaven than what our Saviour here presents us with. The state of the glorified saints shall not only be a state of freedom from temporal pains, or eternal pains, or a freedom from spiritual pains and imperfections, but a state of perfect positive holiness, pure light, ardent love, spiritual liberty, holy delights; when all created good shall perfectly vanish, all created love shall be swallowed up, the soul shall become of a most God-like disposition, shining forth in the glory that he shall put upon it, glorying in nothing but the blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in his divine image and perfections, and wrapt up entirely into his infinite fulness to all eternity: which hath made me oftentimes to nauseate, and indeed to blame the poor low descriptions of the kingdom of heaven which I have found in books and sermons, for too dry, yea, and gross; which describe heaven principally as a place, and give it such circumstances of beauty, firmness, security, light, and splendour, pleasant society, good neighbourhood, as they think will most commend an earthly habitation. True indeed,

the Holy Ghost in scripture is pleased to condescend so far to our weak capacities, as to describe that glorious state to us by such things as we do best understand, and are apt to be most taken with, and do most gratify our senses in this world; as a kingdom, paradise, a glorious city, a crown, an inheritance; but yet it is not the will of God that his enlightened people should rest in such low notions of eternal life; for in other places God speaks of the state of glory according to the nature and excellency of it, and not according to the weakness of our understanding, and describes it at another rate, calling it the life of angels; as the beholding of God—a coming unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ—God’s being all things in us—it is called a knowing of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ. In a word, which is as high as can be spoken, higher indeed than can be perfectly understood, it is called a being like unto God—“We shall be like unto him.” But this use is not so much for reproof, as it is for information.

2. Here is matter of reproof, yea, and of just indignation, against the gross, low, sensual, earthly life of professors, who yet hope to be the children of the resurrection, and to be as the angels of God in heaven. What! hope to be like them then, and yet altogether unlike them now! I speak not in a passion, but out of a just indignation that I have conceived against myself, and against the generality even of saints themselves. I am not going to speak

of covetousness commonly so called ; there is a sin much like to it, which is not indeed a single sin, but an evil and unseemly temper, which is earthly-mindedness, or minding of earthly things ; or if you will, because I would not be misunderstood, a living upon the creature, or a loving of the creature with a distinct love. Oh ! the insensible secrecy, and insuperable power of this creature-love ! I cannot sufficiently exclaim against it. Why do we spend noble affections upon such low and empty nothings ? Are we called with such a high calling, think you, that our conversation should be so low ? Is the fulness of the fountain yours, and do ye yet delight to sit down by and bathe yourselves in the shallow streams ? Is your life hid with Christ with God ? why then do you converse as if your life were bound up in the creature ? Have you laid up your treasure in the blessed God ? what do your hearts, then, so far from it ? Is your happiness in heaven ? why then is not your conversation there too ? Do ye count it your bliss to see God ? what then mean those fond glances that ye cast upon created comforts, and that impure love which you bestow on things below ? I mean not only the “ bleatings of the sheep, and the lowings of the oxen,” I speak not of the grosser sort of earthly-mindedness, sensuality, or covetousness, but of that more refined and hidden creature-love, a loving of friends, relations, health, liberty, life, and that not in God, but with a love distinct from that love wherewith we

love God. To love all these in God, and for his sake, and as flowing from him, and partaking of him, and with the same love wherewith we love God himself, is allowed us; but to love them with a particular love, as things distinct from God, to delight in them merely as creatures, and to follow them as if some good, or happiness, or pleasure, were to be found in them, distinct from what is in God, this is a branch of spiritual adultery, I had almost said idolatry. To taste a sweetness in the creature, and to see a beauty and goodness in it, is our duty; but then, it must be the sweetness of God in it, and the goodness of God which we ought alone to taste and see in it. As we say, “the wife shines with the rays of her husband;” so more truly every creature shines but by a borrowed light, and commends to us the goodness, and sweetness, and fullness of the blessed Creator. You have heard that the glorified souls shall live upon God alone entirely, wholly, eternally; and should not the less glorious souls, I mean gracious souls, do so too, in some degree? yea, even we who are upon earth, and do yet use creatures, should behold all the scattered beams of goodness, sweetness, perfection, that are in these creatures, all united and gathered up in God, and so feeding upon them only in God, and upon God in all of them. It is the character of wicked and godless men, that they set up and drive a trade for themselves; live in a way distinct from God, as though they had no dependence upon

him; they love the world with a predominant love; they enjoy creature-comforts in a gross, unspiritual manner; they dwell upon the dark side of their mercies; they treasure up riches, not only in their chests, but in their hearts; they feed upon the creature, not only with their bodies, but their very souls do feed upon them: and thus, in a word, they “live without God in the world.” All this is no wonder; for that which is of the earth must needs be earthly; but is it not a monstrous thing, that a heavenly soul should feed upon earthly trash? I speak without any hyperbole; the famous king of Babylon, forsaking the society of men, and herding himself with the beasts of the earth, and eating grass with the oxen, was not so absurd a thing, nor half so monstrous or unseemly, as the children of the Most High God forsaking the true bread of souls, and feeding upon the low fare of carnal men, even created sweetness, worldly goods: nay, a glorious star falling from its own sphere, and choking itself in the dust, would not be such an eminent piece of baseness; for what is said of the true God in one sense, is true of the truly godly in this sense—“He that cometh from heaven is above all;” that is, above all things that are below God himself.

3. Shall this life of angels be also the life of saints? this may then serve as a powerful consideration to mortify in us the love of this animal life, to make us weary of this low kind of living, and quicken us to long after so blessed a change. Well might

the Apostle say indeed, that to die was gain; for is not this gain, to exchange an animal for an angelical life? a life which is in some sense common to the very beasts with us, for that which in some sense may be called the life of God? For as the blessed and holy God lives upon his own infinite and self-sufficient fulness, without being beholden to anything without himself, so shall the saints live upon him, and upon the self-same infinite fulness, and shall not need any creature-contributions. The Apostle indeed saith, that "the last enemy to be destroyed is death;" which is true of enemies without us; and it is true with respect to Christ, who shall make a general resurrection from the dead, for that is the proper meaning of it; but it is true also, that the last enemy to be overcome within us is the love of life, therefore it is said, that a man will part with anything to keep his life, Job ii. 4; and we do generally excuse the matter, and cry, Oh! life is sweet, life is precious. It must be confessed, and it may be granted; I believe that there is an inclination of the soul to the body, arising from that dear and inconceivable union that God himself hath made of them, which is purely natural, some say altogether necessary for the maintaining of man in this complex state, and not in itself sinful: possibly there may not be found a man upon earth so holy and mortified, in whom this is not found; certainly it is the last hinderance to be removed out of the way of our perfect happiness. This, although

in itself natural, yea necessary, and without blame, yet in the inordinateness of it, ordinarily, if not constantly, becomes sinful. I count him the most perfect man in the world, who loves not his own life with an inordinate sinful love ; who loves it only in God, and not with a creature-love distinct from God. There are two ways whereby this natural and lawful love of life becomes sinful—immoderateness and inordinateness. Immoderateness is, when men love their lives at that rate, that they are filled with unreasonable and distracting fears, cares, and thoughts about them ; when the whole business of life is almost nothing else but a studiousness to preserve the being of life. Inordinateness is, when men, though they do not love their lives at that excessive rate, yet do love life as a creature-good, not in God, nor in order to him, but love it for itself, as something out of God. Every carnal man in the world is guilty of the latter, and I doubt but few saints are altogether free from the guilt of it. Now, that this immoderate love of life ought to be subdued in Christians, all men almost will grant : if any will not grant it, we can easily prove it from the command of God—“ Take no thought for your life.”—“ Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.” Both which words in the most favourable interpretation that can be given of them, do, in the judgment of all, forbid immoderation : nay, a mere philosopher would inforce this from mere moral considerations, which I cannot now stand upon.

But this inordinate love of life, as it is a more secret evil, a more refined corruption, is harder to be discovered, and men are loth to be convinced of the evil of it. Now, this particular distinct loving of life not as in God, but in itself, as a creature-good, is clearly condemned in that first and great commandment—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind;" as if he should say, God the supreme, infinite, perfect, original, essential, self-sufficient Good, is to be loved in the highest, and purest, and strongest manner, that the heart of men is capable to love; and all other things only in him; and under him, and as being of him, and for his sake. Let it be allowed that life is good; yet it must be added, that it is but a created good: let it be allowed that life is comfortable; yet it must be acknowledged, that man's chief comfort and happiness doth not stand in this animal life. So then, life itself is to be loved in God, who is the fountain and spring of life; it is to be loved in the quality of a created good, and no otherwise. Now, created goods are to be loved only in the Creator, as coming from him, as partaking of him, as leading to him. Argue the case a little thus: The soul of man is allowed to love its body with which the great God hath united it, and to love union with this body, which union we call *life*; but this body being a creature, and a creature much inferior to itself, and much more ignoble than itself, cannot in

reason be judged to be the fit and adequate object of its strongest and best affections: that must needs be something more excellent than itself; and that cannot be anything in this world, for this world hath nothing so noble, so excellent in it as the soul of man; it must needs be the Creator himself. Well, seeing God is the supreme, self-sufficient, perfect Good, he is to be loved with all the strength and powers of the soul, singly and entirely: and the will of God being God himself, is not only to be submitted to, or rested in, but to be chosen and loved above all created things, yea, even above life itself, the best of creatures. So then, if it be the will of God to call for our lives, we ought readily to give them up; because we ought to love the will of God much more than our lives. I pray you be impressed with this, that the will of God being pure, holy, and perfect, should not only be submitted to, or rested in, but even loved and chosen above all creatures. Now, the will of God is not that only whereby he teaches men, and prescribes laws to them, but that whereby he rules and governs the world, and disposes of men in any condition of life, or takes away their lives from them. The eternal Fountain of goodness can send forth nothing but what is perfectly good; and that which is perfectly good ought to be loved with a universal, pure, and, as far as possible, perfect love. This you will say, perhaps, is a high and a hard saying; but let it not seem impossible for a man to love his own life only

in God, and in subordination to him ; for this God requires, and he requires not things impossible—“ If any man come after me, and hate not his own life, he cannot be my disciple ;” that is, not simply hate it, but in comparison of me and my will. It is not then impossible, nay, you see it is a necessary duty, without which we cannot be Christ’s disciples. The saints of old found it possible. Holy Paul gives this answer readily—“ I am ready to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus ;” and “ I count not my life dear unto me, so that I might finish my course with joy.” It is witnessed of the whole army of martyrs that “ they loved not their lives unto the death :” that is, they did not value them in respect of God and his truth. Neither let any one flatter himself, and say, Yea, if I were called to die for God, I would rather do it than deny him ; for the will of God is as much to be eyed in his sending for us by a natural death as by martyrdom, and a not giving up our lives to him at any time, is as truly to deny him and his will, as not to give them up at the stake when we are called to it. Besides, how shall we imagine that he that is unwilling to die in his bed should be willing to die at a stake? Now, this duty of being mortified to the love of this animal life, being so difficult, yet so necessary, and so noble, how doth it become every saint to study to attain to this perfection? which, that we may, let us press upon ourselves this consideration, this doctrine, that the glorified saints shall live as angels of

God in heaven. We know that if this body were broken down, this low life cut off, we should live like angels, not being beholden any more to poor creatures for help or comfort, but should be filled with the fulness of God, filled with his image and glory, and live upon him entirely for evermore. Yea, I may add, that this very living above our own lives merely at the will of God, is a participation of the angelical life even in this world; therefore labour to be mortified to that love of this life which is here upon earth, yea, to be weary of it, yea, almost ashamed of it.

4. Shall we thus live the lives of the angels, subsisting in God, feasting upon him, filled with him to all eternity? this may moderate our sorrow which we conceive for the loss of any created good, houses, lands, husband, wife, children, &c.; yet a little while and we shall not miss them, shall not need them, shall not desire them any more. The blessed angels live a glorious life, and they have none of these, but are perfectly satisfied in the enjoyment of God alone; they have no wives nor children, yet they want none; and yet a little while, and we shall have none either, neither shall we want them, having all things in the God of all things: they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are in conjunction with the Father, with love, and goodness, and truth itself; and so they have no want of anything. If you have no candles left in the house, yet it is towards day-break, and the sun will rise upon you,

and you shall need none, and yet have light enough too. In a word, learn to live independent of them whilst you have them, and you will be the better able to live without them when they are removed.

5. I come now to the fifth and last use that I shall make of this doctrine; and oh that you and I may make this happy use of it! Shall the saints be as the angels of God in their way of living upon God, and enjoying all happiness in him alone for ever? shall this certainly be our life in heaven? oh! then, labour to begin this life upon earth. If you cannot perfectly transcribe, yet, at least, imitate that angelical kind of life. Though you are here imprisoned in a body of earth, and oft cumbered and clogged with bodily infirmities, and called to tend upon bodily necessities, yet, as far as this animal state will permit, live upon God. Do not excuse nor vindicate that low kind of earthly life, do not justify your living below and besides God, but stir up yourselves to behold where your happiness lies, and live not willingly below it. Certainly a pious soul hath more than bare hope in this world. God the blessed, infinite, and communicative Good, hath not locked himself so far out of sight, but that he gives his people a comfortable beholding of him even whilst they are in their pilgrimage; and what Solomon saith of the life of the godly, he means of their present life. "The way of life is above to the wise:" their living not only shall be, but is now above; it is a high way of living. They are

certainly a puny sort of mechanical Christians, that think and talk only of a heaven to come, and dream of a happiness without them, and distinct from them. The truly religious and God-like soul cannot so content himself, but being spirited and principled from above, is carried out after the infinite and almighty Good, as a thing is carried towards its centre; and hastens into his embraces as the iron hastens to the loadstone, and longs to be in conjunction with it. If therefore ye be from heaven, live above all earthly things: "If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above." If ye be born of God, live upon God. Deny self, live besides self, that is, live not to the service of your senses, to the lust of the flesh, to the lust of the eye, to the pride of life; let not your souls be servants to your sins, no, nor to your senses; that were for servants to ride on horseback, and princes to walk on foot. Live above self, that is, let your souls quit all their own interest in themselves, and entirely resign themselves to God, as to all points of duty and service. But that is not all; neither is that it which I urge you to from these words; but live above the creature, and whatsoever is in it, namely, delighting in God, conversing and communing with him alone as the chief Good; desire not any creature any further than as it may help you forward to the Creator; neither delight in it any further than as it either represents some of the divine perfections, witnesses something of divine love, or leads to some divine participation or com-

munion. Seeing we shall come to live upon God, and delight in God alone, without any creature, let us now live upon, love God alone in very creature. Now, to give you a more distinct knowledge of this high and noble life, I will explain it in some particulars, negatively and affirmatively.

I. Negatively.

1. "Live not upon self." I speak not of living unto self, but live not upon self, self-excellencies, self-sufficiencies, any created accomplishments, which was the life of the Stoics, those great philosophers, who placed happiness in the enjoyment of themselves, which they called "independence of all things." To enjoy one's self indeed is a high duty, a noble privilege, a duty of the gospel—"Possess ye your souls." But how must we enjoy ourselves? why, only in God. He enjoys himself,

(1.) Not who, in a sullen melancholy, retires to a solitary and monastic life, as many of the sourer sort of Papists do.

(2.) Nor he who, in a proud mood, disdains the perfections of God shining forth in other men; and hiding himself from them through envy, contents himself to sit and admire his own personal accomplishments, as many humourists do.

(3.) Nor he who finding nothing without him, and knowing nothing above him to give his soul her full rest, settles upon a foundation of his own, and admires a self-sufficiency in the temper of his own spirit, a little subdued by philosophical precepts, as

the Stoics did—But he who enjoys himself in God, that is, who doth not view himself in the narrow point of his own being, but, taking a view of himself in the unbounded essence of God, loves, and enjoys, and values himself, and all his personal excellencies as he is in God, and partakes of his perfections. To live in a way of self-converse is below the end of man's creation, who was made for a higher good; and hereby a man shall never obtain true happiness, for it is peculiar to God alone to be happy in himself. “In a word, a soul that confines itself to itself, and lives, and moves, and rejoices only within the narrow cell of its own particular being, deprives itself of that almighty and original goodness and glory that fills the world, and shines through the whole creation.”

2. “Live not upon any creature without yourselves.” Self indeed is a creature; but yet for clearness in proceeding we shall distinguish them. Now, this is the life of the greatest part of men, they live beside God, and move only within the sphere of the creature. You will easily understand that I speak not of the body's living upon the creature, for so God hath appointed that it shall live; and yet as to this too, I say with our Saviour, “Man liveth not by bread alone;” but I speak of the soul of man living upon the creature as its highest good, and feeding upon it as its best fare: they rise up early, and sit up late, and God is not in all their thoughts: they are filled with domestic and

foreign comforts, but behold not the Father of lights from whom all these descend : they live upon the good things of the world, yet live without God in the world. Now, by these men,

(1.) I do not mean those heathens that in the most idolatrous manner do, in the literal sense, set up the creatures for gods.

(2.) Nor those Christians that in a most gross manner make idols of the creatures, and place their happiness in them.

(3.) No, nor only those earthly professors, who follow the world too eagerly, and have such a deep and rooted respect for it, that they can be ordinarily content to suffer creature-employments to juggle God and duties out of their hearts and houses, whose worldliness is apparently too hard for their religion. Who then ? shall we come any nearer ? yes.

(4.) Those are guilty of creature-converse who do not enjoy all creatures in God ; who love anything in any creature with a distinct love, who do not love it only in God ; who love silver, gold, houses, lands, trading, friends ; with a particular over-weening love. Oh take heed of this creature-love, of valuing any created thing any otherwise than in God, any otherwise than as being from God, partaking of him, and leading to him.

3. "Live not upon ordinances." These are God's institutions, love them, cleave unto them, attend upon them, let no temptation cause you to leave them ; but live not upon them, place not your

religion, place not your hope, your happiness in them, but love them only in God; attend upon them, yet not so much upon them, as upon God in them; lie by the pool, but wait for the angel; love not, no, not a divine ordinance for its own sake. Why, who doth so? alas! who almost doth not?

(1.) Thus did they in Ezek. xxxiii. 32, who delighted in the prophet's eloquence, and in the rhetoric of his sermons, as much as in a well-tuned voice and harmonious music: and so do thousands in England, who read the Bible for the style or the story's sake, and love to sit under learned and elegant discourses, more for accomplishment than for conversion: and swarms of priests, who preach themselves more than Christ Jesus, even in his own ordinances; as a proud boy rides a horse into the market, to set forth himself more than his master's goods.

(2.) But there are many not so gross as these, who do yet use ordinances in a way very gross and unspiritual, placing their devotion in them, and sinking their religion into a settled course of hearing or praying; who will wait upon God, as they call it, at some set and solemn times, new moons, and Sabbaths, it may be evening and morning; but religion must not be too busy with them, nor intermeddle in their ordinary affairs, or worldly employments; it hath no place there; they do not count it a garment for every day's wear.

(3.) And not only these, but even almost all men are too apt to seek rest in duties and ordinances, or, at least, to be pretty well satisfied with the work done, whether they have conversed with God there or not. Oh, if you love your souls, seek your happiness higher! Conversing with divine ordinances, I confess, is honourable and amiable, but it is too low a life for an immortal soul.

II. Affirmatively.

Let nothing satisfy you but God himself; take up with no pleasure, no treasure, no portion, no paradise, nay, no heaven, no happiness, below the infinite, supreme, and self-sufficient Good. Let your eye be upon him, and his all-filling fulness; let your desire be unto him, and to the remembrance of his name; follow hard after to know the Lord, and to enjoy the Father through his Son Jesus Christ; let your fellowship be with the Father, and with the Son, by the Spirit, "O love the Lord, all ye his saints;" "love him with all your soul, and with all your strength;" "yea, and keep yourselves always in the love of God; persevere and increase in the love of God;" "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Oh sweet duty! Oh amiable, pleasant task! Oh sweet and grateful command! Away, ye crowd of creatures, I must keep my heart for my God: away, ye gaudy suitors, away, ye glittering toys, there is no room for you; my whole soul, if its capacity were ten thousand times larger than it is, were too scant to entertain the supreme

Good, to let in infinite goodness and fulness. Oh charge it upon yourselves with the greatest vehemence ! Love the Lord, O my soul, keep thyself in the love of God ; let the love of God constrain you, and keep yourselves under the most powerful constraints of it. In a word, live upon God as upon uncreated life itself, drink at the fountain, feed upon infinite fulness, depend upon almighty power, refer yourselves to unsearchable wisdom, and unbounded love ; see nothing but God in the creature, taste nothing but God in the world, delight yourselves in him, long for communion with him, and communications from him, to receive of his fulness grace for grace. Then do we live most like angels, when we live most purely in God, and find all the powers of our souls spending themselves upon him ; and ourselves, our life, and all the comforts of it, flowing from him, and again swallowed up in him. But because we are yet in the body, I shall explain it in these following particulars :—

1. “Converse with God in all your self-excellencies.” I bade you before not converse with these ; now, I say, converse with God in these. Thus do the angels ; they know nothing that they have of their own, they enjoy nothing distinct from God : they are excellent creatures, excellent in knowledge, power, holiness, &c. ; yet they enjoy all their excellencies in God, and ascribe them all to him, and so let us labour to do.

(1.) View yourselves not in your own particular

beings, but in the essence of God ; look upon yourselves as being and subsisting in the midst of an infinite essence, in which the whole creation is, as it were, wrapt up, and doth subsist.

(2.) And whatever excellency you find in your souls or bodies, look not upon it as your own ; maintain not a mine and thine, a distinction of interests between God and yourselves, but look upon all as God's, and enjoy it in him.

(3.) When you find yourselves tempted to cast a fond and unchaste look upon the beauty, strength, activity, or temper of your own bodies, upon the ingenuity, wisdom, constancy, courage, composedness of your own souls, take heed of settling into a selfish admiration of any of them, but enjoy them in God, and say, This, O my body, this, O my soul, is no other than the portraiture of the blessed God ; these created excellencies are broken beams of the infinite, unspotted, uncreated perfections. Having once attained to this, we shall no longer covet to be admired, desire to be commended, fret at being undervalued ; I mean, not in a selfish manner, but rather break out in a spiritual passion with the Psalmist, " O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men ! "

(4.) Nay, let me add, when you find yourselves ready to put your own stamp upon God's best coin, to look upon supernatural gifts and graces with a sinful, selfish admiration, remember that you have them

only in Christ Jesus, and enjoy them in your head; labour to enjoy grace itself only in Christ, as the Apostle, "I, yet not I, but Christ in me;" "I labour, yet not I, but the grace of God." So ought we to glory: I believe, I love, I am patient, penitent, humble; yet not I, but the grace of God that is with me, Christ Jesus that dwelleth in me. And indeed a pious man, who thus lives at the very height of his own being, yea, and above it too, knows best how to reverence himself, yea, and to love himself too, and yet without any self-love: for he loves himself in God, and his own endowments as divine ornaments.

2. "Converse with God, and live upon him in the excellencies of all other creatures, and in all your creature-enjoyments." We cannot live without creatures, as the angels do indeed, but let us come as near them as we can, which is by living above creatures: place your happiness in God, and your hearts upon him; labour to find God all things to you, and in you, and to be filled with his fulness; labour to get your understandings filled with the knowledge of God, your wills filled with his divine will, your hearts filled with his infinite goodness and sweetness, your memories filled with the remembrance of his name, your whole souls filled with his holy and pure image, filled with the fruits of his Holy Spirit: nay, let these very bodies be filled not only with his good creatures, but more especially with his good-will in the creatures. It is

said indeed of the sensual epicures of the world, that their bellies are filled with God's hid treasures, that is, with rare and precious delicacies : but how much better doth God fill the souls of his saints with his hid treasures, when he feedeth them with his divine favour, and dippeth his hand with them in the dish ? This is meat indeed which the saints eat of, which other men, though they feed at the same table, know not of. The glorified saints shall be satisfied wholly and perfectly with the divine image shining gloriously on them, and in them ; to which purpose that of the Psalmist may be accommodated, " I shall be satisfied when I awake with his likeness." Well, we cannot be so satisfied in this life it seems : however, though we cannot be so satisfied with it, yet let us not be satisfied without it, nor satisfied with anything besides it. Resolve, holy soul, Well, if I must not be fully satisfied with the image of my heavenly Father till I awake, I will lie down, and fall asleep hungry as I am then ; for I will not fill my mouth with chaff, nor my soul with the husks that the swine do eat. But, in the mean time, get what you can of God out of creature-enjoyments.

(1.) Enjoy all things for God, and that these two ways :

(i.) Use all for him. Those riches, honours, interest, friends, which are clogs upon the heels of others, let them be as heels to you to carry you heaven-ward ; let your souls be winged with those

very enjoyments, wherewith the wings of others are pinioned; and that which is fuel to their worldly lusts, let it be as fuel to feed and nourish your spiritual love. To use what we have for God, is the only way of not abusing it; this is one way of enjoying all for God, to use all for him: and yet there is something higher in that phrase of enjoying all for God, than this, namely,

(ii.) Value no creature-comfort any further than as it leads to God; and this in a double sense too. 1. Value things to be good only by this, by their leading you unto God. Now, God being the supreme and infinite Good, anything is so far good as it leads to the enjoyment of him. Now, the enjoyment of God is only in being like to him; holiness is his image; so then, every thing is good that tends to sanctification, and to make men partakers of a divine nature. We are usually mistaken in the true notion of good and evil, of mercies and judgments, judging according to the taste, as foolish patients do; but God's thoughts are not as our thoughts. Measure all things by the proportion they bear, and the tendency they have to the supreme Good: and call not anything evil that brings nearer to him, nor anything good that draws off from him. 2. When you have found a thing that is really good, tending and leading to the chief Good, and to the possession of him; labour to enjoy it, and rejoice in it only under this notion, as such; when you love it, let it be with a pure spiritual

love ; and so order your delight in it, that it may be said, you do rather rejoice in the end of it, than in the enjoyment of it.

(2.) Another way of living upon God in the creature is, to enjoy all things as partaking of him. "Every good and perfect gift is from above." Every beam of created light floweth out of the Father of lights. When the blessed and glorious God framed this stately fabric of the visible world, because there was nothing better in the world than himself, he was pleased to copy out himself in it, and to spread his own infinite perfections over it, and through it, so that every particular good is a blossom of the first goodness ; every created excellency is a dark draught of God, and a broken beam of this infinite Sun of righteousness. Oh labour to do so ! look upon the perfections which you find here below, not so much as the perfections of this or that particular being, but as they are so many drops risen out of the Fountain of all perfections, in whom they all meet, and are concentrated. It is well expressed by one, "In a particular being, love the universal Goodness ;" let the whole world be as the garden of God to you, where every creature is a flower, from which you may drink something of the divine sweetness. Alas ! at what a low and sensual rate do we live, when we rejoice in creatures, either as they are excellent, or as they are ours ? whereas indeed neither of these is true ; for they are not excellent, but God is excellent in them ; and how

can we call anything our own, when God made both us and all things for himself? Oh! how injurious it is to the blessed God, when we rob him of his own perfections that he hath imprinted upon the creature, by loving it, and delighting in it, not as in him, but as something distinct from him! nay, we are then injurious to ourselves, as we shall see by and by. Labour to enjoy and to converse with God in the creatures. "O how precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God!" cried David, when he had been meditating of the creature's excellencies. Labour to abstract your minds from terrene things even in the enjoyment of them, and call upon yourselves to love, and live, and feed upon God in them; live not upon the dark side of your mercies, but upon the representations of God in them. Is there anything good? oh, this is a taste of infinite goodness! Is there anything sweet? oh, how sweet is the God that made it so! Is there anything lovely? it is a picture of him whose name is Love. Is anything firm, stable, lasting? it is a shadow of that glorious Essence with whom there is no shadow of change. Have you anything strong? it arises out of that God with whom is everlasting strength. Doth any creature give rest, ease, refreshment? it springs out of the all-satisfying fullness of God. In a word, labour to climb up by every created excellency, as by so many beams, to the Father of lights: let all the world be to you as God's temple, and be ready to say of every place,

as Jacob, "How dreadful is this place! surely this is none other but the house of God;" that God who runs through all created beings, and from himself derives several prints of beauty and excellency all the world over. But especially take heed of your own created comforts, that they do not insensibly lead away your hearts, and ensnare you into a sinful, particular, distinct love of them; which is a sin soon committed, hardly discerned, and most hardly reformed. If any be freed from these inordinate affections, sure they are but few; and those few have come dearly by it; as one said in another case, With a great sum they have obtained this freedom; they have paid for it, not with the fore-skins of the Philistines, but with the lives of what they so loved, there being no way to cure this evil distemper, but cutting off the member infected with it, the part that it fed upon. As a branch of this head, let me add, Labour to live upon God in the excellencies of other men; value them, and all their accomplishments, only in God, as he that did admire God, and enjoy God in them. Wherever you see wisdom, goodness, ingenuity, holiness, justice, or any other accomplishment, say, here and there is God. And this is the honest way of making ourselves masters of whatever is another man's, and enjoying it, as truly as he himself doth, yea, as truly as if it were our own; when we behold all these beams, as coming from the same Fountain of lights, and do love them all in him, with a univer-

sal love. This is the rare art of having nothing, yet possessing all things; of being rich, though one have nothing; and of being wise, though one know nothing.

(3.) The last way of living upon God in the creature is, to taste and feed upon the love of God in them, not only his common bounty, but his special love in Christ. The good will of God gives a sweet relish to every morsel, as I hinted before. Even in the midst of all your delightful, pleasant, sweet enjoyments, let your souls be more affected with this than with them; let this be as the manna lying upon the top of all your outward comforts, which your spirits may gather up and feed upon. But this I touched upon before, therefore I shall add no more concerning it. Thus I have shown you how you may imitate the life of angels, in living upon God, even whilst you live in the body. To this I may add another particular or two.

3. "Converse with God, and live upon him in all his ordinances." Let communion with God be your drift in every duty, and the very life and soul, and sweetness of every ordinance. You never read of a soul more thirsty after ordinances than David, as might appear abundantly; yet if you look well into the expressions, you will find, that it was not so much after them, as after God in them; not after the dead letter; but after the living God—"My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God;" "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God,"

Let the word, preached or read, be as a voice from heaven talking with you ; let your conference be a comment upon that word ; let meditation be as a kind of bringing down God into your souls, and prayer as a raising up of your souls into God, nothing but faith and love put into praises. And so of all the rest.

4. "Converse with God in all his providences ;" prosperity, adversity, plenty, penury, health, sickness, peace, and perplexity. This is a large theme : but as to prosperity, I have spoken something already, under that head of conversing with God in creature-enjoyments ; as for adversity, I have said much more in a large discourse to describe and commend the art of conversing with God in afflictions. Briefly at this time, converse not with losses, wants, afflictions, but with God in them ; and that not only with the justice, righteousness, severity, and sovereignty of God in them, but with the goodness and mercy of God in them. They are dark providences, we had not need to dwell altogether on the dark side of them. If all the ways of the Lord towards his people be mercy and truth, then his roughest and most dark ways are so too : if God be wholly love, then his very corrections proceed not from hatred : if it be his name to be good, and to do good, where have we learned then to call his afflicting providences evils, and to divide evil, which is but one, even as God is one, into sin and affliction ? Surely we speak as men ; and if God call them so, he speaks after the manner of men, as he often doth. If

the governing will of God be pure, perfect, and infinitely good and righteous, ought we not to converse with it in a free and cheerful manner, yea, and to love it too? In a word, pore not upon creature-changes, nor the uncertain wheels of motion, that are turning up and down we know not how, nor how oft; but fix yourselves upon that all-seeing Eye, that unbounded Understanding, that unsearchable and infinite Goodness, which pervades the whole universe, and sits in all the wheels of motion, governing all the strange motions of the creatures in a wonderful and powerful manner, and carrying them all in their several orbs to one last and blessed end.

Thus imitate the angelical life, even whilst you are in the body: converse with God in self-excellencies, in the creature excellencies, ordinances, providences; and yet labour to be more like him still, to abstract your mind from all these, and all material and sensible things, and to converse with God without the help of any creature, I mean in the Spirit, and by a secret feeling of his almighty goodness, and energy of grace, and the communications of a divine life in your souls. In a word, if you would taste of heaven, whilst you are upon earth, labour above all things for a true conjunction of your hearts with God, in a secret feeling of his goodness, and a reciprocation of love to him; and to find the holy and blessed God exercising his grace and power upon all the faculties of your souls, and rendering them like unto himself, and all these powers of the soul mutually spending themselves upon him freely and entirely, as upon

the chief Good, which is their proper and full object. Seeing the saints in glory shall be like unto the angels of God in their way of living in and upon God alone, receive, I pray, this exhortation, which I have so largely prosecuted, and labour to begin that life, as far as you can, upon earth. Is there not reason for such an inference? doth it not now flow naturally from the doctrine? If you think it does not, I will add two or three particulars to strengthen this inference, or at least to clear it.

(1.) It is highly reasonable that we begin to be that which we expect to be for ever, to learn that way of living in which we hope to live to all eternity: so that I infer, upon as strong ground as the Apostle, "He that hath this hope purifieth himself even as Christ is pure."

(2.) If this be the life of angels, then it is the highest and noblest life that any created being is capable of. As by the bread of angels, and the tongue of angels, the most excellent food, and the most excellent language is understood in scripture, so must we understand this life of angels. Now, it is very suitable to the reasonable soul, that immortal, noble being, to aim at the highest and noblest life: "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

(3.) This shall not only be our life in heaven, but itself is something of heaven, a beginning of heaven. This life is not a thing really distinct from life eternal—"This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." "Ye have eternal life." There-

fore we read of eternal life abiding in men, and not abiding in them—"Whoso eateth my flesh hath eternal life." A holy soul thus deified, thus living in and upon God, is as truly glorified upon earth, in some degree, as the world is enlightened by the morning-sun, which is as truly enlightened, though not so gloriously, as by the sun in its greatest height. Oh low and ignoble spirits, who can be satisfied with a happiness which shall only be in the world to come! Certainly it is true and proper speech to say, that a participation of God, is an anticipation of heaven; and to be like unto him, is to be with him. You see what reason I have to make such an inference, and to form it unto such an earnest exhortation; oh, therefore, I beseech you before God, and his holy angels, to endeavour to be like him, and to live like them!

Obj. Say not, How can men on earth live like angels? *Ans.* 1. But fall on and imitate them, though it be—with unequal steps; labour to be as angels, if you cannot be altogether equal to angels. 2. We are bidden to live the life of God—"Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." "Be ye holy as I am holy." If I speak high, how high speak these texts.

Obj. Say not, But how can this animal life permit this? *Ans.* 1. Thus men have lived in the body; thus lived Enoch, thus lived Paul, thus lived David, that man after God's own heart, the greatest and most divine character that can be given of a mortal man, "There is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." 2. Cannot we live in the body, ex-

cept we live to the body? You see saints upon earth live above other men upon earth; and yet a little more pains, take the other flight, and you may live above yourselves too, higher than you do. I will only add a motive or two to this duty of living upon God.

1. "The last enemy to be overcome is creature-love. This is the last enemy that keeps the field, by which alone the greatest part of men do perish everlastingly: beat down this, and you win the day, and shall wear the crown; nay, the very conquest of it is a crown, as I said before.

2. "To live upon God in the creature, is to enjoy the creature in the best sense." You will lose nothing of the creature by this means, but shall enjoy it more fully than ever you did: for the creature is ten thousand times sweeter in God than it is in itself. Yea, in a word, this is the way to enjoy all the world, and to enjoy the accomplishments of all men, and all things, as much as if they were your own.

3. "It is the way never to lose anything." He that lives upon God, spends upon a stock that cannot be wasted, drinks at a fountain that cannot be exhausted. So much as we enjoy of God in the creature, we do not lose with it; and that which we do not so enjoy, we deserve to lose. This then is the secure and honourable life, in comparison of which the life of a prince is but a wallowing in the mire. "Lord, give us evermore this bread," and hearts to feed upon it. Amen.

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST,

BY THE

REV. JOHN FLAVEL.

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST.

COMMUNION with Christ is frequent in the lips of many men, but a hidden mystery to the souls of most men. This atheistical age scoffs at, and ridicules it as enthusiasm and fanaticism; but the saints find that reality and incomparable sweetness in it, that they would not part with it for ten thousand worlds. When the Roman soldiers entered the temple at Jerusalem, and found no image there, as they used to have in their own idolatrous temples; they gave out in a jeer, that the Jews worshipped the clouds. Thus profane atheists scoff at the most solemn, awful, and sweetest part of internal religion as a mere fancy; but the thing is real, sure, and sensible: if there be truth in anything in the world, there is truth in this, that there are real intercourses between the visible and invisible world; between Christ and the souls of believers, which we here call communion: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus." It is really and truly so, we impose not upon the world, we tell you no more than we have felt. The life of Enoch is

called "his walking with God." O sweet and pleasant walk ! all pleasures, all joys are in that walk with God. "Blessed are the people that hear the joyful sound ; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance." The joyful sound there spoken of was the sound of the trumpet, which called the people to the solemn assemblies, where they walked in the light of God's countenance, the sweet manifestations of his favour ; and because the world is so apt to suspect the reality and certainty of this doctrine, the Apostle again asserts it, "Truly our conversation is in heaven." We breathe below, but we live above ; we walk on earth, but our conversation is in heaven. To open this point, three things must come under consideration.

I. What communion with Christ is.

II. That there is such a communion between him and believers.

III. The excellency of this communion.

First, What communion with Christ is, in the general nature of it. To open this it must be considered that there is a twofold communion.

1. A state of communion.

2. Actual communion.

The first is fundamental to the second ; we can have no actual communion with the Father, Son, or Spirit, till we be first brought into a state of communion. This state of communion is in scripture called *κοινωνία*, our fellowship or partnership with Christ : such a fellowship as merchants have in one

and the same ship and cargo ; where one hath more and another less, but, however, a joint, though unequal interest ; one lives in one kingdom, another in another kingdom, but they are jointly interested in the same goods. This comparison must not be stretched beyond its intention, which is to show nothing but this, that Christ and believers are co-partners, or co-heirs in the same inheritance : hence they are called, his fellows ; “ God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” And again, “ If children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” Christ states his people, gives them a right and title not only to himself, but to those good things purchased by him, yea, and the very glory he now enjoys in heaven—“ The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them.”

It is true, there are some things in Christ which are peculiar to himself, and incommunicable to any creature, as his eternity, consubstantiality with his Father, &c. neither have we fellowship in his mediatorial works ; we have the fruits and benefits of them, but no partnership with him in the glory and honour of them ; that is peculiarly his own : and though it be said in the scriptures, that believers “ are righteous as he is righteous,” yet the meaning is not that they can justify others as Christ doth ; no, they are justified by him, but cannot communicate righteousness to others as Christ doth to them. But there are other things wherein there is a partner-

ship between Christ and his people; among others, they partake with him in the spirit of sanctification on earth, and glory in heaven: the same spirit of holiness which dwells in Christ without measure, is communicated by him to the saints in measure: "He hath given us of his Spirit." And as Christ communicates his Spirit to the saints, so he communicates the glory of heaven to them; not that they shall be as glorious in heaven as Christ is: no, he will be known among the saints in glory, as the sun is known from the lesser stars. Thus briefly of the state of communion, which is called in scripture "our being made nigh," and indeed we must be made nigh before we can actually draw nigh. We must be put into a state of fellowship before ever we can have actual communion with God.

2. Beside this state of communion, there is also an actual communion which the saints have in this world with the Father and the Son in the duties of religion. This is what I am here engaged to open: this is our supping with Christ, and his with us: and, for clearness' sake, I shall open it,

First, Negatively, what it is not.

Secondly, Positively, what it is.

First, Negatively, what it is not; for I find persons are hugely apt to mistake in this matter, taking that for communion with God which is not so: and here let it be noted,

(1.) That communion with God doth not consist in the bare performance of religious duties. I do

not say that men may have communion with God in this world without duties, it is a delusion of Satan to think so; but this is what I say, that communion with God consisteth not in the mere performance of duties. Communion and duties of religion are two things, separable one from the other. Men may multiply duties, and yet be strangers to communion with God in them; even humiliation and fasting days may be kept by souls that are estranged from communion with the Lord—"Speak unto all the people of the land, and unto the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even these seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me,?" as if he should say, Had your souls pure intentions and respects in those duties to my glory? Had you special communion with me, or I with you in those duties? Did you ever feel your souls in these days wounded for sin? Or did you not fast out of custom, and mourn for company? God may be near in men's mouths, and at the same time far from their reins. Religious words may flow out of men's lips when not one drop of religion touches their reins and hearts; that is, the secret, inward powers of their souls: you cannot therefore safely depend upon this, Christ rejects this plea. Get a better evidence of communion with God than this, or you will certainly come short of your expectation. "I know you not," saith Christ; there was never any spiri-

tual acquaintance between your souls and me; I know you not in a way of approbation.

(2.) Neither do all stirrings and workings of the affections in duties infallibly evidence and prove communion between Christ and that soul; for it is possible, yea, common, to have the affections raised in a natural way, and by external motives in the duties of religion; this you see in that example, “And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.” The sweet modulation of the prophet’s voice was like the skilful touch of a rare musical instrument, which in a natural way, moved and excited their affections. Thus John’s hearers rejoiced in his ministry for a season. I confess this is very apt to cast souls into a mistake of their condition. They distinguish not between the influences that come upon their affections from without, from extrinsic things, and those that are purely inward, divine, and spiritual. But then,

Secondly, To show you positively what communion with God is. Here we must consider two things,

1. What things it presupposes in us.
2. Wherein the nature of it consists.

1. There are divers things preredquired and pre-supposed unto all actual communion with God in duties; and where these things are wanting, men have no communion with God. You may have communion with his people, and communion with

his ordinances, but not communion with God and Christ in them. And these prerequisites are three:

(1.) Union with Christ is fundamentally necessary to all communion with him. All communion is founded in union; and where there is no union, there can be no communion. ‘You know,’ saith an excellent person,* ‘the member receives nothing from the head unless it be united to it; nor the branch from the root.’ “All is yours, and ye are Christ’s;” ‘here is a vast possession, but all founded upon union: as all communion is founded upon union, so all union terminates in communion: and the closer the union the fuller is the communion.’

Before our union with Christ we are strangers unto God—“We live without God in the world;” it is in Christ that we are made nigh; it is in the beloved we are made accepted. Whilst we are in the state of alienation from Christ, we have no more to do with the communications of joy and peace, with the seals and earnest of the Spirit, than a native Indian hath with the privileges of London. “If any man open to me, (saith Christ) I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me.”

(2.) Communion with God presupposes the habits of grace implanted in the soul by sanctification; a sound and sincere change of heart. No sanctification, no communion; “If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” The Apostle gives the lie

* Dr. Jacomb on Rom. viii. page 69.

to such bold pretenders. "The Lord is nigh to all that call upon him, unto all that call upon him in truth;" the latter clause restrains all spiritual communion unto upright souls. "For an hypocrite shall not come before him."

(3.) Communion with God doth not only suppose grace implanted, but also implanted grace excited, grace in act; for a man may have the habits of faith, love, and delight in him, and yet be without actual communion with God; for by this grace is awakened and put into act. A believer when he is asleep, and acts no grace, is in a state of communion with God; but if he will have actual communion, his faith, love, and delight must be awakened; they must not lie asleep in the habit. "Thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." It was in order to actual communion with Christ that the church so earnestly begs fresh influences of the Spirit to excite her graces into act—"Awake, O north wind, and come thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." And though believers are not so to wait for the influences of the Spirit, as in the mean time to neglect all proper outward means of exciting their own graces, engaging their hearts to approach unto God; yet certainly it is the work of God's Spirit, and without him we can do nothing to any purpose. The seamen may trim the sails, weigh the anchor, put all into a sailing posture;

but till a gale come from heaven there is little or no motion. The same Spirit that plants the habits, is he also that excites the acts of grace. These three things therefore are prerequisites unto all communion with God

2. Next let us consider wherein this heavenly privilege of communion with God doth consist; and more generally it will be found to lie in a spiritual correspondence between Christ and the soul. God lets forth influences upon our souls, and we, by the assistance of his Spirit, make returns again unto God. Communion is a mutual action; so in the text, "I will sup with him, and he with me." We cry to God, and God answers that cry by the incomes of spiritual grace upon the soul: "In the day that I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." More particularly, there are many ways and methods wherein men have this spiritual correspondence or communion with God, namely:—

First, In the contemplation of his attributes.

Secondly, In the exercises of our graces in religious duties.

Thirdly, In his various providences. In all these the saints have communion with him.

1. There is a sweet and sensible communion between God and his people, in the contemplation of the Divine attributes, and the impressions God makes by them upon our souls, whilst we meditate on them. As for instance,

(1.) Sometimes the Lord discovers and manifests to the souls of his people his *immense greatness*; the manifestation of which attribute makes an awful, humbling impression upon the soul, makes them seem as nothing to themselves. Thus when Abraham, that great believer, considered the greatness of that God with whom he had to do; that sight of God seems to reduce him to his first principles, to crumble him, as it were, into dust and ashes again—"I that am but dust and ashes have taken upon me to speak unto God." He now looks upon himself as a heap of vileness and unworthiness; so David, "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy hands, the moon and the stars which thou hast made," (from hence he inferred the greatness of the Creator,) "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him?" as if he should say: When I consider what a great God the Creator of the world is, I am justly astonished that ever he should set his heart upon so vile a thing as man. When men compare themselves among themselves, and measure themselves by themselves, their spirits are apt to swell with pride; but would they look up to God, as these holy men did, they would admire his condescension. And this is communion with God in the meditation of his immense greatness.

(2.) The representations and meditations of the *purity and holiness of God*, working shame and deep abasement in the soul, for the pollutions and sinful filthiness that are in it. This is communion with

God, and an excellent way of fellowship with him. Thus, when a representation of God, in his holiness, was made unto the prophet, there were the seraphims, covering their faces with their wings, and crying one to another, saying; "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." The effect this produced, or the return made by the prophet to this manifestation of God in his holiness, was deep abasement of the soul for his unsuitableness to so holy a God; "Then said I, woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips," &c. And this is real communion with God in his holiness. Thus Job who had stiffly defended his own integrity against men, yet when God enters the lists with him, and he saw what a great and holy God he had to do with, cried out, "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further:" as if he should say, I have done, Lord, I have done; I could answer men, but I cannot answer thee: thou art holy, but I am vile.

(3.) There are sometimes representations of the *goodness and mercy of God*, made unto the souls of his people; when these produce an ingenuous thaw and melting of the heart, into an humble, thankful admiration of it, and an answerable care of pleasing him in the ways of obedience, then have men communion with God in his goodness. The goodness of God runs down to men in a double chan-

nel: his goodness to their bodies in external providences; his goodness to their souls in spiritual mercies. When the goodness of God, either way, draws forth the love and gratitude of the soul to the God of our mercies, then have we real communion with him! Thus Jacob, "And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac; which saidst unto me, return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee. I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant: for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." Ah, Lord, I see a multitude of mercies round about me, and the least of them is greater than I. So David, "And David the king came and sat before the Lord, and said, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hither? And yet this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God, &c. what can David speak more to thee?" You see in these instances, what effects the goodness of God, even in inferior, outward mercies useth to produce in sanctified hearts. But then, if you come to spiritual mercies, and ponder the goodness of God to your souls, in pardoning, accepting, and saving such vile, sinful creatures as you have been; this much more affects the heart, and overwhelms it with holy astonishment; as you see in Paul: "The grace of our Lord was abundant: I was a persecutor, a blasphemer, yet I obtained mercy." So Mary, that

notorious sinner, when pardoning grace appeared to her, into what a flood of tears, into what transports of love did the sight of mercy cast her soul ! She wept, and washed her Saviour's feet with tears of joy and thankfulness. No terrors of the law, no frights of hell, thaw the heart like the apprehensions of pardoning mercy.

(4.) Sometimes there are special representations of the *veracity and faithfulness of God*, made unto his people, begetting trust and holy confidence in their souls ; and when they do so, then have men communion with God in his faithfulness. Thus—“ I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” There is a discovery of the faithfulness of God, and what follows upon this ? “ So that we may boldly say, the Lord is our God ; we will not fear what man can do unto us.” Here is faithfulness in God, producing trust and confidence in the believer ; this is that reciprocation, that sweet fellowship and communion between God and a believer, with respect to his fidelity. “ Behold, God is my salvation : I will trust, and not be afraid.” And truly, friend, this is what the Lord justly expects from thee, even thy trust and confidence in him, thy steady dependence on him, in return for all the discoveries of his faithfulness to thee both in his word and providences.

(5.) There are manifestations of the *anger, and displeasure of God*, by the hiding of his face from them, and the frowns of his providence : when these produce repentance, and deep humiliation for sin,

an inquietness, a restlessness of spirit, till he restore his favour, and manifest his reconciliation to the soul; even here also, is a real communion between God and the soul: "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." Nor will a gracious soul rest there, but will take pains to sue out a fresh pardon—"Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice; restore unto me the joys of thy salvation."

I cannot here omit to detect a great mistake even amongst God's own people; many of them understand not what communion there should be with God under the manifestations of his displeasure for sin: they know the affectionate meltings of their souls into love, praise, &c. to be communion with God; but that in the shame, grief, and sorrow produced in them by the manifestations of God's displeasure, I say that even in these things there may be communion with God they understand not. But let me tell thee, that even such things as these are the choice fruits of the spirit of adoption, and that in them thy soul hath as real and beneficial communion with God as in the greatest transports of spiritual joy and comfort. O it is a blessed frame to be before the Lord, as Ezra was, after conviction of thy looseness, carelessness, and spiritual defilements, the consequence of those sins; saying with him—"O my God, I am ashamed, and even blush to lift up my face unto thee." Shame and blushing are as excellent signs of communion with God as the sweetest smiles.

Lastly, There are representations and special contemplations of the *omniscience of God*, producing sincerity, comfort in appeals, and recourse to it in doubts of our own uprightness: And this also is a choice and excellent method of communion with God. (1.) When the omniscience of God strongly obliges the soul to sincerity and uprightness, as it did David, Psal. cxxxix. 11, 12, compared with Psal. xviii. 23, "I was also upright before him." The consideration that he was always before the eye of God was his preservative from iniquity, yea, from his own iniquity. (2.) When it produceth comforts in appeals to it, as it did Hezekiah—"Remember now, O Lord, that I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart." So Job also appeals to this attribute—"Thou knowest that I am not wicked." So did Jeremiah—"But thou, O Lord, knowest me, thou hast seen me, and tried my heart towards thee." (3.) When we have recourse to it under doubts and fears of our own uprightness. Thus did David—"Search me, O God, and try my heart; prove me, and see my reins: see if there be any way of wickedness in me." In all these attributes of God, Christians have real and sweet communion with him. Which was the first thing to be opened, to wit, communion with God in the meditation of his attributes.

2. The next method of communion with God is *in the exercises of our graces in the various duties of religion*; in prayer, hearing, sacraments, &c. in all

which the Spirit of the Lord influences the graces of his people, and they return the fruits thereof in some measure to him. As God hath planted various graces in regenerate souls, so he hath appointed various duties to exercise and draw forth those graces ; and when they do so, then have his people sweet actual communion with him. And,

(1.) To begin with the first grace that shows itself in the soul of a Christian, to wit, *repentance*, and sorrow for sin. In the exercise of this grace of repentance, the soul pours out itself before the Lord with much bitterness and brokenness of heart ; casts forth its sorrows ; which sorrows are as so much seed sown, and, in return thereto, the Lord usually sends an answer of peace—"I said, I will confess my transgression, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Here is a voice of sorrow sent up, and a voice of peace coming down, which is real communion between God and man in the exercises of repentance.

(2.) As there are seasons in duty wherein the saints exercise their repentance, and the Lord returns peace ; so likewise the Lord helps them in their duties to act their *faith*, in return whereunto, they find from the Lord inward support, rest, and refreshment. "I had fainted unless I had believed." And oftentimes an assurance of the mercies they have acted their faith about.

(3.) The Lord many times draws forth eminent degrees of our *love* to him, in the course of our du-

ties; the heart is filled with love to Christ. The strength of the soul is drawn forth to Christ in love, and this the Lord repays in kind, love for love—"He that loveth me, my Father will love him; and we will come and make our abode with him." Here is sweet communion with God in the exercise of love. O what a rich trade do Christians drive this way in their duties and exercises of graces?

(4.) To mention no more in the duties of *passive obedience*, Christians are enabled to exercise their patience, meekness, and long-suffering for Christ, in return for which, the Lord gives them the singular consolations of his Spirit, double returns of joy. "The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them." The Lord strengthens them with passive fortitude, with all might in the inner man, unto all long-suffering; but the reward of that long-suffering is joyfulness. This is the trade they carry on with heaven.

3. Beside communion with God in the contemplation of his attributes, and graces exercised in the course of duties, there is another method of communion with God in the way of his *providences*, for therein also his people walk with him. To give a taste of this, let us consider providence in a four-fold aspect upon the people of God:—

(1.) There are *afflictive providences*, rods and rebukes wherewith the Lord chastens his children, this is the discipline of his house; in answer whereunto gracious souls return meek and child-like submission, a fruit of the spirit of adoption; they are

brought to accept the punishment of their iniquities. And herein lies communion with God under the rod; this return to the rod may not be presently made, for there is much stubbornness unmortified in the best hearts; but this is the fruit it shall yield; and when it doth, there is a real communion with God and the afflicted soul. Let not Christians mistake themselves, if when God is smiting, they are humbled, searching their hearts, and blessing God for the discoveries of sin made by their afflictions; admiring his wisdom in timing, moderating, and choosing the rod; kissing it with a child-like submission, and saying, it is good for me that I have been afflicted: that soul hath real communion with God, though it may be for a time without joy.

(2.) There are times when *providence straitens* the people of God; when the waters of comfort ebb and run very low, wants pinch; if then the soul returns filial dependence upon fatherly care, saying with David, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;" it belongs to him to provide, and to me to depend: I will trust my father's care and love. Here now is sweet communion with God under pinching wants. The wants of the body enrich the soul, outward straitenings are the occasions of inward enlargements. O see from hence how good it is to have an interest in God as a Father whatever changes of providence may come upon you.

(3.) There are seasons wherein the Lord exposes his people to imminent and visible dangers, when

to the eye of sense there is no way of escape. Now when this produces trust in God, and resignation to the pleasure of his will, here is communion with God in times of distress and difficulty. Thus David, “At what time I am afraid I will trust in thee;” as if he should say, Father, I see a storm rising, thy poor child comes under his Father’s roof for shelter; for whither should a distressed child go but to his Father? And then, as to the issues and events of doubtful providences, when the soul resigns and leaves itself to the wise disposal of the will of God, as David—“Here am I, let him do with me as seemeth good in his sight.” This is real and sweet communion with God in his providences. And so much for the nature of communion with God.

Secondly, In the next place I shall evidence the reality of communion with God, and prove it to be no fancy. I confess it grieves me to be put upon the proof of this, but the atheism and profaneness of the age we live in seems to make it necessary; for many men will allow nothing for certain but what falls under the cognizance of sense. And O that they had their spiritual senses exercised! then they would sensibly discern the reality of these things. But to put the matter out of question, I shall evidence the truth and reality of the saints’ communion with God divers ways.

Evidence 1. From the saints’ union with Christ. If there be a *union* between Christ and believers,

then of necessity there must be a *communion* between them also. Now the whole word of God which you profess to be the rule of your faith, plainly asserts this union between Christ and believers; a union like that between the branches and the root, or that between the head and the members. Now if Christ be to believers as the root to the branches, and as the head to the members; then of necessity there must be a communion between them: for if there were not a communion, there could be no communications; and if no communications, no life. For it is by the communication of vital sap and spirits, from the root and from the head, that the branches and members subsist and live.

Evid. 2. There is a *cohabitation* of Christ with believers; he dwells with them, yea, he dwells in them—"I will dwell in them, and walk in them." The soul of a believer is the temple of Christ: yea, his living temple. And if Christ dwell with them; yea, if he dwell in them and walk in them, then certainly there must be communion between him and them; if they live together they must converse together. A man indeed may dwell in his house, and yet cannot be said to have communion with it; but the saints are a living house, they are the living temples of Christ; and he cannot dwell in such temples, capable of communion with him, and yet have no communion with them.

Evid. 3. The reality of communion between God

and the saints is undeniably evinced from all the spiritual relations into which God hath taken them. Every believer is the child of God and the spouse of Christ. God is the believer's Father, and the church is the Lamb's wife. Christ calls the believer not only his servant, but friend; henceforth I call you not servants, but friends, &c. Now, if God be the believer's Father, and the believer be God's own child, certainly there must be communion between them. If Christ be the believer's husband, and the believer be Christ's spouse, there must be communion between him and them. What, no communion between the Father and his children, the husband and the wife? We must either renounce and deny all such relations to him, and therein renounce our Bibles; or else yield the conclusion, that there is a real communion between Christ and believers.

Evid. 4. The reality of communion with God evidently appears from the institution and appointment of so many ordinances and duties of religion, on purpose to maintain daily communion between Christ and his people. As to instance but in that one institution of *prayer*, a duty appointed on purpose for the soul's meeting with God, and communion with him: "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." Now, to what purpose can it be conceived such an ordinance is appointed for the soul's drawing nigh to God, and God to it; if there be no such thing as communion to be enjoyed with

him? If communion with God were a mere phantom, as the carnal world thinks it to be, what encouragement have the saints to bow their knees to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? But surely there is an access to God in prayer—"In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence." Access to what? If God be not there, and that there can be no communion with him, what means that access? "I will meet with you, saith the Lord, and I will commune with you in every place where I record my name." Certainly duties had never been appointed, but for the sake of God's communing with us, and we with him.

Evid. 5. This is yet further evidenced from the mutual desires both of Christ and his people to be in sweet and intimate communion one with the other. The scripture speaks much of the saints' vehement desires of communion with Christ, and of Christ's desires after communion with the saints, and of both jointly. The saints' desires after communion with him are frequent in all the scriptures, see Psal. lxiii. 1—3; xlii. 1; cxix. 20; and the like throughout the New Testament. And Christ is no less desirous, yea, he is much more desirous of communion with us than we are with him. Consider that expression of his to the spouse—"O thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it." As if he should say, O my people, you frequently converse one with another, you talk daily together; why shall not you

and I converse one with another : you speak often to men, O that you would speak more frequently to me ! “Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice ; for thy voice is sweet, and thy countenance is comely.” And then these desires are mutually expressed one to another—“Surely” (saith Christ) “I come quickly, amen : even so come, Lord Jesus,” saith the church. Now if there be such vehement mutual desires after communion between Christ and his people in this world ; then certainly there is such a thing as real communion between them, or else both must live a very restless and dissatisfied life.

Evid. 6. The mutual complaints that are found on both sides of the interruption of communion, plainly prove there is such a thing. If God complain of his people for their estrangements from him, and the saints complain to God about his silence to them, and the hidings of his face from them ; surely then there must be a communion between them, or else there could be no ground of complaint for the interruptions of it. But it is manifest God doth complain of his people for their estrangements from him—“Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thy espousals. What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me ?” as if he should say, You and I have been better acquainted in days past ; what cause have I given for your estrangements from me ? And thus Christ in like manner complains

of the church of Ephesus ; after he had commended many things in her, yet one thing grieves and troubles him—"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." And then on the other side, when the Lord hides his face, and seems to estrange himself from his people ; what sad lamentations and moans do they make about it, as an affliction they know not how to bear ? Thus Heman, "Lord, why castest thou off my soul ? Why hidest thou thy face from me ?" So David, "Hide not thy face from me : put not thy servant away in anger." This is what they cannot bear.

Evid. 7. The reality of communion with God is made visible to others, in the sensible effects of it upon the saints that enjoy it. There are visible signs and tokens of it appearing to the conviction of others. Thus that marvellous change that appeared upon the very countenance of Hannah, after she had poured out her heart in prayer, and the Lord had answered her ; it is noted, "She went away, and her countenance was no more sad." You might have read in her face that God had spoken peace and satisfaction to her heart. Thus, when the disciples had been with Christ, the mark of communion with him was visible to others—"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, they marvelled, and took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." It is sweet, Christian, when the heavenly cheerfulness, and spirituality of thy

conversations with men, shall convince others that thou hast been with Jesus.

Evid. 8. We may prove the reality of communion with God, from the impossibility of sustaining those troubles the saints do without it. If prayers did not go up, and answers come down, there were no living for a Christian in this world. Prayer is the out-let of the saints' sorrows, and the in-let of their supports and comforts. Say not, other men have their troubles as well as the saints, and yet they make a shift to bear them without the help of communion with God. It is true, carnal men have their troubles, and those troubles are often too heavy for them. "The sorrows of the world work death;" but carnal men have no such troubles as the saints have, for they have their inward, spiritual troubles, as well their outward troubles. And inward troubles are the sinking troubles; but this way the strength of God comes in to succour them: and except they had a God to go to, and fetch comfort from, they could never bear them: "I had fainted unless I had believed." Paul had sunk under the buffetings of Satan, unless he had gone once and again to his God, and received this answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

Evid. 9. We conclude the reality of communion with God, from the end of the saint's *vocation*. We read frequently in scripture of effectual calling; now what is that to which God calls his people, out of the state of nature, but unto fellowship and com-

munion with Jesus Christ? "God is faithful, by whom ye are called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." They are called, you see, into a life of communion with Christ; therefore certainly there is such a communion, else the saints are called to the enjoyment of a fancy, instead of a privilege, which is the greatest reproach that can be cast upon the faithful God that called them.

Evid. 10. Lastly, In a word, the characters and descriptions given to the saints in scripture, evidently prove their life of communion with God. The men of this world are manifestly distinguished from the people of God in scripture; they are called, "The children of this world;" the saints, "The children of light." They are said to be "after the flesh," saints to be "after the Spirit." They "mind earthly things," but the saint's "conversation is in heaven." By all which it undeniably appears that there is a reality in the doctrine of communion between Christ and his people. We are not imposed upon, it is no cunningly devised fable; but a thing whose foundation is as sure as its nature is sweet.

Thirdly, In the last place, I shall show you the transcendent excellency of this life of communion with God: it is the life of our life, the joy of our hearts; a heaven upon earth, as will appear by these twenty excellencies thereof following:—

1 *Excellency.* It is the *assimilating* instrument whereby the soul is moulded and fashioned after the image of God. This is the excellency of commu-

nion with God, to make the soul like him. There is a twofold assimilation, or conformity of the soul to God, the one perfect and complete, the other inchoate and in part. Perfect assimilation is the privilege of the perfect state, resulting from the immediate vision and perfect communion the soul hath with God in glory—"When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Perfect vision produceth perfect assimilation; but the soul's assimilation or imperfect conformity to God in this world, is wrought and gradually carried on, by daily communion with him. And as our communion with God here, grows up more and more into spirituality and power, so in an answerable degree doth our conformity to him advance: "But we all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." All sorts of communion among men have an assimilating efficacy; he that walks in vain company is made vainer than he was before; and he that walks in spiritual, heavenly company, will be ordinarily more serious than he was before. But nothing so transforms the spirit of a man as communion with God doth. Those are most like unto God that converse most frequently with him. The beauty of the Lord is upon those souls; it forms the spirit of a man after the divine pattern. That is the first excellency of communion with God, it assimilates them to God.

2 *Excellency*. It is the *beauty* of the soul, in the eyes of God and all good men ; it makes the face to shine. No outward splendor attracts like this ; it makes a man the most desirable companion in the whole world : “ These things have I written unto you, that you might have fellowship with us : and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” This was the great and only inducement the Apostle makes use of to draw the world into fellowship with the saints, that their fellowship is with God. And if there were ten thousand other inducements, yet none like this. You read of a blessed time, Zech. viii. when the earth shall be full of holiness ; when the Jews, that are now as a lost generation to the eye of sense, shall be called, and an eminent degree of sanctification shall be visible in them ; and then see the effect of this, ver. 23, “ In those days, ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirts of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.” This is the powerful attractive, “ the Lord is with you ;” it is the effect of communion with God, which makes the righteous more excellent than his neighbour. What a vast and visible difference doth this make between one man and another ! How heavenly, sweet, and desirable are the conversations and company of some men ! How frothy, burdensome, and unprofitable is the company of others ! and what makes the difference but

only this, the one walks in communion with God, the other is alienated from the life of God.

3 *Excellency*. It is the *centre* which rests the motions of a weary soul: it is the rest and refreshment of a man's spirits—"Return unto thy rest, O my soul." When we attain perfect communion with God in heaven, we attain to perfect rest, and and all the rest the spirit of man finds on earth, is found in communion with God. Take a sanctified person, who hath intermitted for some time his communion with the Lord, and ask him, Is your soul at rest and ease? He will tell you, no! The motions of his soul are like those of a member out of joint, neither comely nor easy. Let that man recover his spiritual frame again, and, with it, he recovers his rest and comfort. Christians, you meet with variety of troubles in this world; many a sweet comfort is cut off, many a hopeful project dashed by the hand of providence; and what think you is the meaning of those blasting, disappointing providences? Surely this is their design and errand, to disturb your false rest in the bosom of the creature; to pluck away those pillows you were laying your heads upon, that thereby you might be reduced unto God, and recover your lost communion with him; and say, with David, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." Sometimes we are settling ourselves to rest in an estate, in a child, or the like; at this time it is usual with God to say, go, losses, smite and blast such a man's estate; go, death, and take away the desire of his

eyes with a stroke, that my child may find rest no where but in me. God is the ark; the soul, like the dove Noah sent forth, let it fly where it will, it shall find no rest till it come back to God.

4 *Excellency.* It is the *desire* of all gracious souls throughout the world. Wherever there is a gracious soul, the desires of that soul are working after communion with God. As Christ was called, "The desire of all nations," so communion with him is "the desire of all saints;" and this speaks the excellency of it—"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to see the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple;" that is, to enjoy communion with him in the public duties of his worship. "One thing have I desired," that is, one thing above all other things; such a one, as, (if God shall give me,) I can comfortably bear the want of all other things. Let him deny me what he will, if so be he will not deny me this one thing; this one thing shall richly recompense the want of all other things. Hence the desires of the saints are so intense and fervent after this one thing, in such expressions as the following—"My soul panteth after thee, O God;" and "My soul fainteth for thy salvation." No duties can satisfy without it, the soul cannot bear the delays, much less the denials of it. They reckon their lives worth nothing without it. Ministers may come, ordinances and sabbaths may come; but there is no satisfaction

to the desires of a gracious heart, till God comes too ; “ O when wilt thou come unto me ? ”

5 *Excellency*. As it is the desire, so it is the *delight* of all the children of God, both in heaven and earth. As communion with the saints is the delight of Christ—“ Let me hear thy voice : ” and again—“ The companions hearken to thy voice ; cause me to hear it : ” so communion with Christ is the delight of his people. “ I sat under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste. ” It is the pleasure of Christ to see the yearning countenances, the blushing cheeks, the dropping eyes of his people upon their knees ; and it is the delight of the saints to see a smile upon his face, to hear a voice of pardon and peace from his lips. I must tell you, Christians, you must look for no such delights as these, in any earthly enjoyment, none better than these, till you come home to glory ; communion with God then appears most excellent, in as much as it is found to be the desire and delight of all gracious souls.

6 *Excellency*. It is the *envy of Satan*, that which cuts and grates that wicked spirit. O how it grates, and galls that proud and envious spirit, to see men and women enjoying the felicity and pleasure of that communion with God, from which he himself is fallen and cut off for ever ! to see the saints imbosomed in delightful communion with Christ, whilst himself feels the pangs of horror, and despair ! this is what he cannot endure to behold. And

therefore you should find in your experience, that times of communion with God are usually busy times of temptation from the devil. "And he showed me Joshua the high-priest standing before the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him." It is well for thee, Christian, that thou hast an Advocate standing at God's right hand to resist, and frustrate his attempts upon thee; otherwise Satan would this way destroy your communion with God, and make that which is now your delight, to be your terror. Many ways doth the devil oppose the saint's communion with God; sometimes he labours to divert them from it: this business shall fall in, or that occasion fall out, on purpose to divert thy soul's approach to God; but if he cannot prevail there, then he labours to distract your thoughts, and break them into a thousand vanities; or if he succeed not there, then he attacks you in your return from duty, with spiritual pride, security, &c. these fierce oppositions of hell discover the worth, and excellency of communion with God.

7 *Excellency*. It is the *end* of all ordinances, and duties of religion. God hath instituted every ordinance and duty, whether public or private, to beget and maintain communion between himself and our souls. What are ordinances, duties, and graces, but perspective glasses to give us a sight of God, and help us to communion with him? God never intended his ordinances to be our rest, but *mediums*, and instruments of communion with himself, who

is our true rest. When we go into a boat, it is not with an intention to dwell, and rest there, but to ferry us over the water, where our business lies. If a man miss of communion with God in the best ordinances, or duty, it yields him little comfort. He comes back from it, like a man that hath travelled a great many miles to meet a dear friend, upon special and important business; but met with disappointment, and returns sad and dissatisfied. God appoints ordinances to be meeting-places with himself in this world—"Thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark, and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee; and there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee, from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims." It was not the sight of the golden cherubims, or of the ark overlaid with pure gold, that could have satisfied Moses, had not the special presence of God been there, and he had had communion with him. "O God, (saith David) my soul thirsteth for thee, that I might see thy beauty, and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." Magnificent structures, artificial ornaments of the places of worship, are of little account with a gracious soul; it is the presence of God, and communion with him, which is the beauty and glory the saints desire to behold.

8 *Excellency*. It is the *evidence* of our union with Christ and interest in him. All union with Christ must evidence itself by a life of communion

with him, or our pretensions to it are vain and groundless. There be many of you (I wish there were more) enquiring after evidences and signs of your union with Christ; why here is an evidence that can never fail you: do you live in communion with him? May your life be called a walking with God, as Enoch's was? Then you may be sure you have union with him, and this is so sure a sign, as death itself (which uses to discover the vanity of false signs) will never be able to destroy. "Remember now, O Lord, (saith Hezekiah) that I have walked before thee in truth, and in a perfect heart." O professors! it will be a dreadful thing (whatever ungrounded hopes and false comforts you now have) to find them shrinking away from you, as certainly as they will do at death; and all upon this account: I have been a man of knowledge, I have been frequent in the external duties of religion, but my heart was not in them; I had no communion with the Lord in them, and now God is a terror to my soul. I am going to his awful bar, and have not one sound evidence to carry along with me. This is a remarkable place—"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit;" that is, let us evidence the life of grace in us by exercising that grace in a life of communion with God. When all is said, this is the surest evidence of our union with Christ; and no gifts or performances whatsoever can amount to an evidence of our union with Christ without it.

9 *Excellency.* It is *ease* in all pains, sweet and

sensible ease to a troubled soul. Look, as the bleeding of a vein cools, eases, and refreshes a feverish body ; so the opening of the soul by acts of communion with God, gives sensible ease to a burdened soul : griefs are eased by groans heavenward. Many souls are deeply laden with their own fears, cares, and distresses ; no refreshment for such a soul, no such *anodyne* in the whole world as communion with God is. How did troubles boil in David's soul ? night and day God's hand was heavy on him ; his soul, as Elihu speaks, was like bottles full of new wine ; he must speak to God that he may be refreshed : and so he did, and was refreshed by it. " I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." It would grieve one to see how many poor distressed souls carry their troubles up and down the world, making their complaints to one another ; but no ease. Away to thy God, poor Christian, get thee into thy closet, pour out thy soul before him ; and that ease which thou seekest in vain elsewhere, will there be found, or no where.

10 *Excellency*. It is *food* to the soul, and the most delicious, pleasant, proper, and satisfying food that ever it tasted ; it is hidden manna. " By these things, O Lord, do men live, and in them is the life of their soul." A regenerate soul cannot live without it ; their bodies can live as well without bread or breath as their souls without communion with God : it is more than their necessary food. Here

they find what they truly call marrow and fatness. O the satisfaction and support they draw out of spiritual things by thoughts and meditations upon them!—"To be spiritually minded is life and peace." The delicacies upon princes' tables are husks and chaff to this. Crows and vultures can live upon the carrion of this world, but a renewed soul cannot subsist long without God. Let such a soul be diverted for a time from its usual refreshments this way, and he shall find something within paining him like the sucking and drawing of an empty stomach. It is angel's food, it is that your souls must live upon throughout eternity, and most happily too.

11 *Excellency*. It is the *guard* of the soul against the assaults of temptation. It is like a shield advanced against the fiery darts of that wicked one. Your safety and security lie in drawing nigh to God—"They that are far from thee shall perish: but it is good for me to draw near to God." It is good indeed; not only the good of comfort, but the good of safety is in it—"The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him." You know the gracious presence of God is your shield and safety; and if you will have the Lord thus present with you in all your fears, straits, and dangers, see that you keep near to him in the duties of communion: "For the Lord is with you whilst you are with him."

12 *Excellency*. It is the *honour* of the soul, and the greatest honour that ever God conferred on any

creature. It is the glory of the holy angels in heaven, to be always beholding the face of God. O that God should admit poor dust and ashes unto such a nearness to himself! to walk with a king, and have frequent converse with him, put a great deal of honour upon a subject; but the saints walk with God; so did Enoch, so do all the saints. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus." They have liberty and access with confidence; the Lord, as it were, delivers them the golden key of prayers by which they may come into his presence on all occasions with the freedom of children to a father.

13 *Excellency*. It is the *instrument* of mortification, and the most excellent and successful instrument for that purpose in all the world—"This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the works of the flesh." Walking in the Spirit is the same thing with walking in communion with God. Now, saith that apostle, if you thus walk in the Spirit, in the actings of faith, love, and obedience, throughout the course of holy duties, the effect of this will be, that ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. He doth not say, You shall not feel the motions of sin in you, or temptations to sin assaulting you; but he saith, You shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, sin shall not have dominion over you; this will let out the life-blood of sin. A temptation overcome this way is more effectually subdued than by all the vows, resolutions, and ex-

ternal means in the world: as a candle that is blown out with a puff of breath may be rekindled by another puff, but if it be quenched in water it is not so easily lighted again; so it is here: you never find that power or success in temptations when your hearts are up with God in their exercises of faith and love, as you do when your hearts hang loose from him, and dead towards him. The schoolmen assign this as one reason why the saints in heaven are impeccable, no sin can fasten upon them, because, say they, they there enjoy the beatifical vision of God. This is sure, the more communion any man hath with God on earth, the freer he lives from the power of his corruptions.

14 *Excellency.* It is the *kernel* of all duties and ordinances: words, gestures, &c. are but the integuments, husks, and shells of duties. Communion with God is the sweet kernel, the pleasant and nourishing food which lies within them: you see the fruits of the earth are covered and defended by husks, shells, and such like integuments; within which lie the pleasant kernels and grains, and these are the food. The hypocrite who goes no further than the externals of religion, is therefore said to feed on ashes, to spend his money for that which is not bread, and his labour for that which satisfieth not. He feeds but upon husks, in which there is but little pleasure or nourishment. What a poor house doth a hypocrite keep? Words, gestures, ceremonies of religion, will never fill the soul; but

communion with God is substantial nourishment. "My soul (saith David) shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, whilst I think and meditate on thee." It would grieve one's heart to think what airy things many souls satisfy themselves with; feeding like Ephraim upon the wind, well contented if they can but shuffle over a few heartless, empty duties; whilst the saints, feeding thus upon hidden manna, are feasted, as it were, with angel's food.

15 *Excellency*. It is the *light* of the soul in darkness; and the pleasantest light that ever shone upon the soul of man. There is many a soul which walketh in darkness; some in the darkness of ignorance and unbelief, the most dismal of all darkness, except that in hell. There are others who are children of light in a state of reconciliation, yet walk in the darkness of outward afflictions, and inward desertions and temptations; but as soon as ever the light of God's countenance shines upon the soul in the duties of communion with him, that darkness is dissipated and scattered; it is all light within him and round about him — "They looked unto him and were enlightened;" they looked, there is faith acted in duty; and were enlightened, there is the sweet effect of faith. The horrors and troubles of gracious souls shrink away upon the rising of this cheerful light. As wild beasts come out of their dens in the darkness of the night, and shrink back again into them when the sun ariseth; so do the

fears and inward troubles of the people of God when this light shines upon their souls. Nay more, this is a light which scatters the very darkness of death itself. It was the saying of a worthy divine of Germany upon his death-bed, when his eye-sight was gone, being asked how it was within? "Why," said he, "though all be dark about me," yet, pointing as well as he could to his breast, "*hic sat lucis*, here is light enough."

16 *Excellency*. It is *liberty* to the straitened soul, and the most comfortable and excellent liberty in the whole world. He only walks at liberty that walks with God—"I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts." Wicked men cry out of bands and cords in religion, they look upon the duties of godliness as the greatest bondage and thralldom in the whole world—"Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us;" as if he should say, away with this strictness and preciseness, it extinguishes the joy and pleasure of our lives; give us our cups instead of Bibles, our profane songs instead of spiritual psalms, our sports and pastimes instead of prayers and sermons. Alas, poor creatures, how do they dance in their shackles and chains! when, in reality, the sweetest liberty is enjoyed in those duties at which they thus snuff. The law of Christ is the law of liberty; the soul of man never enjoys more liberty than when it is bound with the strictest bands of duty to God. Here is liberty from enthralling lusts, and from enslaving fears: "The law of the Spirit of life in

Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." And here is freedom indeed: "If the Son make you free, then are ye free indeed." And here is freedom from fears, Luke i. 74, 75. Those that will not endure any restraint from their lusts, will have their freedom to sin; a freedom they shall have, such as it is: "When ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness." Let none therefore be prejudiced at the ways of duty and strict godliness—"The law of Christ is the perfect law of liberty;" not liberty to sin, but liberty from sin.

17 *Excellency*. It is a *mercy* purchased by the blood of Christ for believers, and one of the principal mercies settled upon them by the new covenant-grant. A peculiar mercy, which none but the redeemed of the Lord partake of; a mercy which cost the blood of Christ to purchase it. I do not deny but there are thousands of other mercies bestowed upon the unregenerate; they have health, wealth, children, honours, pleasures, and all the delights of this life; but for communion with God, and the pleasures that result therefrom, they are incapable of these. No supping with Christ, upon such excellent privileges and mercies as these, till the heart be opened to him by faith; you cannot come nigh to God, until you be first made nigh by reconciliation. What would your lives, Christians, be worth to you, if this mercy were cut off from you? There would be little sweetness or savour in all your outward mercies, were it not for this mercy that sweetens

them all. And there is this difference, among many others, between this mercy and all outward mercies: you may be cut off from the enjoyment of those, you cannot from this; no prison can keep out the Comforter. O bless God for this invaluable mercy.

18 *Excellency*. It is *natural* to the new creature; the inclination and instinct of the new creature leadeth to communion with God. It is as natural to the new creature to desire it, and work after it, as it is to the new-born babe to make to the breast—"As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." There is a law upon the regenerate part, which inwardly and powerfully obliges it to acts of duty, and converse with God in them. Communion with God is a thing that ariseth out of the principles of grace. You know all creatures in this lower world act according to the laws of nature; the sun will rise, and the sea will flow at their appointed times; and the gracious soul will make towards its God in the times and seasons of communion with him. They are not forced on to those duties by the frights of conscience, and the fears of hell, so much as by the natural inclination of the new creature. Two things demonstrate communion with God to be congenial with the regenerate part, called the hidden man of the heart, namely: (1.) The restlessness of a gracious soul without it, Cant. iii. 2. The church, in the first verse, had sought her be-

loved, but found him not. Doth she sit down satisfied in his absence? No; "I will rise now, and go about the city, in the streets, and in the broad ways; I will seek him whom my soul loveth." (2.) The satisfaction and pleasure, the rest and delight which the soul finds and feels in the enjoyment of communion with God, plainly show it to be agreeable to the new nature—"My soul shall be satisfied when I think on thee." And when it is thus, then duties become easy and pleasant to the soul: "His commandments are not grievous." Yea, and such a soul will be constant and assiduous in those duties. That which is natural, is constant as well as pleasant. What is the reason hypocrites throw up the duties of religion in times of difficulty, but because they have not an inward principle agreeable to them? The motives to duty lie without them, not within them.

19 *Excellency*. It is the *occupation* and trade of all sanctified persons, and the richest trade that was ever carried on by men. This way they grow rich in spiritual treasures; the revenues of it are better than silver and gold. There be many of you have traded long for this world, and it comes to little; and had you gained your designs you had gained but trifles. This is the rich and profitable occupation—"Our conversation is in heaven." Our commerce and trade lies that way, so that word signifies. There be few Christians that have carried on this soul-enriching trade any considerable time, but can

show some spiritual treasures which they have gotten by it—"This I had, because I kept thy precepts." As merchants can show the gold and silver, the lands and houses, the rich goods and furniture, which they have gotten by their successful adventures abroad; and tell their friends, so much I got by such a voyage, and so much by another: so Christians have invaluable treasures, though their humility conceals them, which they have gotten by this heavenly trade of communion with God. Their souls are weak, and by communion with God they have gotten strength: "I cried, and thou strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." They have gotten peace by it, a treasure inestimable: "Great peace have they that love thy law and nothing shall offend them." They have gotten purity by it: "They do no iniquity that walk in thy ways." O what rich returns are here! nay, they get sometimes full assurance by it. The riches of both the Indies will not purchase from a Christian the least of these mercies. These are the rich rewards of our pains in the duties of religion; "In keeping thy commandments there is great reward."

20 *Excellency*. It is *oil* to the wheels of obedience, which makes the soul go on cheerfully in the ways of the Lord—"Then will I run the ways of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." *Non tardat uncta rota*,—Oiled wheels run nimbly. How prompt and ready for any duty of obedience, is a soul under the influence of commu-

nion with God! Then, as Isaiah, having gotten a sight of God, "Here am I, Lord, send me." Now the soul can turn its hand to the duties of,

First, Active ; and

Secondly, Passive obedience.

First, Hereby the soul is prepared and fitted for the duties of *active obedience*, to which it applies itself with pleasure and delight—"Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy;" or, as it is in the Hebrew, "the gladness of my joy." It goes to prayer as a hungry man to a feast, or as a covetous man to his treasures—"I have rejoiced in the way of thy commandments as much as in all riches."

Secondly, It prepares the soul for *passive obedience*: makes a man to rejoice in his sufferings. It will make a Christian stand ready to receive any burden or load that God shall lay upon his shoulders, and even be thankful to be so employed—"This joy of the Lord is their strength." A Christian, under the cheerful influences of near communion with God, can, with more cheerfulness, lay down his neck for Christ, than other men can lay out a shilling for him. In all these twenty particulars, you have an account of the excellency of this privilege; but O how short an account have I given of it! What remains, is the application of this point, in a double use:—

I. Of information.

II. Of exhortation.

I. For *information* in the following inferences:—

Inference 1. How sure and certain a thing it is, that there is a God, and a state of glory prepared in heaven for sanctified souls.

These things are undeniable. God hath set them before our spiritual eyes and senses: beside the revelation of it in the gospel, which singly makes it infallible; the Lord, for our abundant satisfaction, hath brought these things down to the touch and test of our spiritual senses and experiences. You that have had so many sights of God by faith, so many sweet tastes of heaven in the duties of religion, O what a confirmation and seal have you of the reality of invisible things! You may say of heaven, and the joys above, as the Apostle did of him that purchased it—"That which our eyes have seen, and our ears have heard, and our hands have handled," &c. For God hath set these things in some degree before your very eyes, and put the first-fruits of them into your own hands. The sweet relish of the joy of the Lord is upon the very palate of your souls. To this spiritual sense of the believing Hebrews, the Apostle appealed, when he said, "Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better, and an enduring substance." This knowing in ourselves is more certain and sweet than all the traditional reports we can get from the reports of others—"Whom having not seen ye love; whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, ye re-

joice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." There is more of heaven felt and tasted in this world than men are aware of; it is one thing to hear of such countries as Spain, Italy, Smyrna, by the discourses and reports we heard of them in our childhood, and another thing, to understand those countries by the rich commodities imported from them, in the way of our trade and commerce. O did we but know what other Christians have felt and tasted, we should not have such staggering thoughts about invisible things! but the secret comforts of religion are, and ought to be for the most part inclosed things. Religion lays not all open; the Christian life is a hidden life.

Infer. 2. If such a height of communion with God be attainable on earth, then most Christians live below the duties and comforts of Christianity.

Alas, the best of us are but at the foot of this pleasant mount Pisgah. As we are but in the infancy of our graces, so we are but in the infancy of our comforts. What a poor house is kept by many of God's own children; living between hopes and fears, seldom tasting the riches and pleasures, the joys and comforts of assurance! and will you know the reasons of it? There are five things which usually keep them poor and low as to spiritual joys and comforts. (1.) The incumbrances of the world, which divert them from, or distract them in their duties of communion with God, and so keep them low in their spiritual comforts: they

have so much to do on earth, that they have little time for heavenly employments. O what a noise and din do the trifles of this world make in the heads and hearts of many Christians ! How dear do we pay for such trifles as these ? (2.) A spirit of formality creeping into the duties of religion, impoverishes the vital spirit thereof, like the wanton embraces of the ivy, which binds and starves the tree it clasps about. Religion cannot thrive under formality ; and it is difficult to keep out formality in a settled course of duty, and much more when duties are intermitted. (3.) The business of temptations pestering the minds of many Christians, especially such as are of melancholy constitutions. How importunate and restless are these temptations with some Christians ? They can make little comfort or advantage out of duty, by reason of them. (4.) Heart-apostacy, inward decays of our first love, is another reason why our duties prosper so little—"Thou hast left thy first love." You were not wont to serve God with such coldness. (5.) In a word, spiritual pride impoverishes our comforts ; the joys of the Spirit, like brisk wines, are too strong for our weak heads. For these causes, many Christians are kept low in spiritual comforts.

Infer. 3. How sweet and desirable is the society of the saints ! it must needs be desirable to walk with them, who walk with God.

No such companions as the saints. What benefit,

or pleasure can we find in converses with sensual worldlings? All we can carry out of such company is guilt or grief. "All my delight (saith David) is in the saints, and in the excellent of the earth, which excel in virtue;" and their society would certainly be much more sweet, and desirable, than it is, did they live more in communion with God than they do. There was a time when the communion of the saints was exceeding lovely: the Lord restore it to its primitive glory and sweetness.

Infer. 4. What an unspeakable mercy is conversion, which lets the soul into such a state of spiritual pleasure?

Here is the beginning of your acquaintance with God, the first tale of spiritual pleasures, of which there shall never be an end. All the time men have spent in the world in an unconverted state, hath been a time of estrangement and alienation from God; when the Lord brings a man to Christ, in the way of conversion, he then begins his first acquaintance with God. "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee." This is your first acquaintance with the Lord, which will be a growing thing; every visit you give him in prayer, increaseth your acquaintance, and begets more intimacy, and humble, holy familiarity between him and you. And, O what a paradise of pleasure doth this let the soul into! the life of religion abounds with pleasures: "All his ways are ways of pleasantness, and his

paths are peace." Now you know where to go, and unload any trouble that presseth your hearts, whatever prejudices and scandals Satan and his instruments, cast upon religion; this I will affirm of it, that that man must necessarily be a stranger to true pleasure, and empty of real comfort, who is a stranger to Christ, and the duties of communion with him. It is true, here is no allowance for sinful pleasures, nor any want of spiritual pleasures. Bless God, therefore, for converting grace, you that have it, and lift up a cry to heaven for it, you that want it.

Infer. 5. Lastly, If there be so much delight, and pleasure in our imperfect, and often interrupted communion with God here; O then, what is heaven! what are the immediate visions of his face in the perfect state?

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." You have heard glorious, and ravishing reports in the gospel, of that blessed future state, things which the angels desire to look into. You have felt, and tasted joys unspeakable, and full of glory, in the actings of your faith and love upon Christ; yet all that you have heard, and all that you have felt and tasted in the way to glory, falls so short of the perfection and blessedness of that state, that heaven will, and must be a great surprise to them that have now the greatest acquaintance with it. Though the present comforts of the saints are some-

times as much as they can bear, for they seem to reel and stagger under the weight of them—"Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, I am sick of love." Yet, I say, these high tides of pleasant joy, are but shallows to the joys of his immediate presence. And as they run not so deep, so they are not constant and continued as they shall be above—"Ever with the Lord." And thus much for information.

II. Use, for *exhortation*.

The last improvement of this point will be by way of exhortation.

First, To believers.

Secondly, To unbelievers.

First, Is this the privileged state, into which all believers are admitted by conversion? Then strive to come up to the highest attainment of communion with God in this world, and be not contented with just so much grace as will secure you from hell; but labour after such a height of grace and communion with God, in the exercise thereof, as may bring you into the suburbs of heaven on earth.

Forget the things that are behind you, as to satisfaction in them, and press toward the mark, for the prize of your high calling. It is greatly to your loss, that you live at such a distance from God, and are so seldom with him; think not the ablest ministers, or choicest books will ever be able to satisfy your doubts and comfort your hearts, whilst you let down your communion with God to so low

a degree. O that you might be persuaded now to hearken obediently to three or four necessary words of counsel.

1 *Counsel.* Make communion with God the very scope and aim of your souls in all your approaches to him in the ordinances and duties of religion. Set it upon the point of your compass, let it be the very thing your souls design; let the desires and hopes of communion with God be the thing that draws you to every sermon and prayer. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may see the beauty of the Lord, and enquire after him in his temple." That was the mark David aimed at; and men's success in duties is usually according to the spiritual aims and intentions of their hearts in them: both sincerity and comforts lie much in men's ends.

2 *Counsel.* In all your approaches to God, beg and plead hard with him for the manifestations of his love, and further communications of his grace. "Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice; have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When thou saidst, seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. Hide not thy face far from me, put not thy servant away in anger." How full and thick of pleas and arguments for communion with God was this prayer of David? Lord, I am come, in obedience to thy command; thou saidst, "Seek ye my face," thou biddest me come to thee, and wilt thou put away thy servant in

anger? Thou hast been my help, I have had sweet experience of thy goodness, thou dost not use to put me off, and turn me away empty.

3 Counsel. Desire not comfort for comfort's sake; but comforts and refreshments for service and obedience' sake; that thereby you may be strengthened to go on in the ways of your duty with more cheerfulness—"Then will I run the ways of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." As if he should say, O Lord, the comforts thou shalt give me, shall be returned again in cheerful services to thee. I desire them as oil to the wheels of obedience, not food for my pride.

4 Counsel. As ever you expect to be owners of much comfort in the ways of your communion with God, see that you are strict and circumspect in the course of your conversation. It is the looseness and carelessness of our hearts and lives which impoverishes our spiritual comforts. A little pride, a little carelessness, dashes and frustrates a great deal of comfort, which was very near us, almost in our hands; to allude to that, Hos. vii. 1, "When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered." So here, just when the desire of thy heart was come to the door, some sin stept in the way of it. "Your iniquities (saith God) have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you." The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, is sensible and tender; he hath quick resentments of your unkindnesses and offences. As

ever, therefore, you expect comfort from him, beware of him, and grieve him not.

Secondly, In the last place, this point speaks necessary counsel and advice to unbelievers; to all that live estranged from the life of God, and have done so from the womb. To you the voice of the Redeemer sounds a summons once more—"Behold, I stand at the door and knock." O that at last you might be prevailed on to comply with the merciful terms propounded by him. Will you shut out a Saviour bringing salvation, pardon, and peace with him! Christ is thy rightful owner, and demands possession of thy soul: if thou wilt now hear his voice, thy former refusals shall never be objected. If thou still reject his gracious offers, mercy may never more be tendered to thee; there is a call of Christ which will be the last call, and after that no more. Take heed what you do; if you still demur and delay, your damnation is just, inevitable, and inexcusable. Hear me, therefore, you unregenerated souls, in what rank or condition soever providence hath placed you in this world, whether you be rich or poor, young or old, masters or servants, whether there be any stirrings of conviction in your consciences or not. For however your conditions in this world differ from each other at present, there is one common misery hanging over you all, if you continue in that state of unbelief you are now fixed in.

And 1. Hearken to the voice and call of Christ, you that are exalted by providence above your poorer neighbours; you that have your heads, hands, and hearts full of the world; men of trade and business, I have a few solemn questions to ask you this day.

(1.) You have made many gainful bargains in your time, but what will all profit you if the agreement be not made between Christ and your souls? Christ is a treasure which only can enrich you, Matt. xiii. 44. Thou art a poor and miserable wretch, whatever thou hast gained of this world, if thou hast not gained Christ, thou hast heaped up guilt with thy riches, which will more torment thy conscience hereafter, than thy estate can yield thee comfort here.

(2.) You have made many insurances to secure your floating estates, which you call policies; but what insurance have you made for your souls? Are not they exposed to eternal hazards? O impolitic man! to be so provident to secure trifles, and so negligent in securing the richest treasure.

(3.) You have adjusted many accounts with men, but who shall make up your accounts with God, if you be Christless? "What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Say not, you have much business under your hands, and cannot allow time; you will have space enough hereafter to reflect upon your folly.

2. You that are poor, and mean in the world, what say you, will you have two hells, one here, and another hereafter? No comfort in this world,

nor hope for the next? Your expectations here laid in the dust, and your hopes for heaven built upon the sand? O if you were once in Christ, how happy were you, though you knew not where to fetch your next bread! "Poor in the world, but rich in faith; and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised." O blessed state! If you had Christ, you had then a right to all things; you had then a father to take care for you. But to be poor and Christless, no comfort from this world, nor hopes from the next; this is to be truly miserable indeed. Your very straits and wants, should prompt you to the great duty I am now pressing on you; and methinks it should be matter of encouragement that the greatest number of Christ's friends and followers, come out of that rank and order of men to which you belong.

3. You that are seamen, floating so often upon the great deeps, you are reckoned a third sort of persons between the living and the dead; you belong not to the dead, because you breathe, and scarcely to the living, because you are continually so near death. What think you, friends, have you no need of a Saviour? Do you live so secure from the reach and danger of death? Have your lives been so pure, righteous, and innocent, who have been in the midst of temptations in the world abroad? Ponder that scripture, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, "Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves

with mankind," &c. ponder it, I say, and think whether you have not as great and pressing a necessity of Jesus Christ, as any poor souls under heaven? You have had many temporal salvations from God, great and eminent deliverances, and will these satisfy you? Is it enough that your bodies are delivered from the danger of the sea, though your souls sink, and perish in the ocean of God's wrath for ever? If you will yet accept Christ upon his terms, all that you have done shall be forgiven. The Lord now calls to you in a still voice; if you hear his voice, well; if not, you may shortly hear his voice in the tempestuous storms without you, and a roaring conscience within you. Poor man, think what an interest in Christ will be worth, wert thou now (as shortly thou mayest be) floating upon a piece of wreck, or shivering upon a cold and desolate rock, crying, Mercy, Lord, mercy! Well, mercy is now offered thee, but in vain wilt thou expect to find it, if thou continue thus to despise and reject it.

4. You that are aged and full of days, hearken to the voice of Christ, God hath called upon you a long time: when you were young you said, it is time enough yet, we will mind these things when we are old, and come nearer to the borders of eternity. Well, now you are old, and just upon the borders of it; will you indeed mind it now? You have left the great concernments of your souls to this time, this short, very short time: and do the

temptations of your youth take hold upon your age? What! delay and put off Christ still as you were wont to do? Poor creatures, you are almost gone out of time, you have but a short time to deliberate; what you do must be done quickly, or it can never be done. Your night is even come upon you when no man can work.

5. You that are young, in the bud or flower of your time, Christ is a suitor for your first love; he desires the kindness of your youth; your spirits are vigorous, your hearts tender, your affections flowing and impressive, you are not yet entered into the incumbrances and distracting cares of the world. Hereafter a crowd and thick succession of earthly employments and engagements will come on; sin will harden you by custom and continuance. Now is your time; you are in the convertible age; few that pass the season of youth (comparatively speaking) are brought over to Christ afterwards. It is a rarity, the wonder of an age, to hear of the conversion of aged sinners. Besides, you are the hopes of the next generation: should you be Christ-neglecting and despising souls; how bad soever the present age is, the next will be worse. Say not we have time enough before us, we will not quench the sprightly vigour of our youth in melancholy thoughts: remember there are skulls of all sizes in Golgotha; graves of all lengths in the church-yard: you may anticipate those that stand nearer the grave than you seem to do. O you cannot be happy too soon.

As young as you are, did you but taste the comforts that be in Christ, nothing would grieve you more than that you knew him no sooner. Behold he standeth at thy door in the morning of thy age, knocking this day for admission into thy heart.

6. You that have had some slight, ineffectual and vanishing convictions upon you formerly ; the Lord Jesus once more renews his call : Will you now at last hear his voice ? It is an infinite mercy to have a second call. I doubt not but there are many among you, whilst you have sat under the word, have had such thoughts as these in your hearts : Sure my condition is not right, nor safe ; there must another manner of work pass upon my soul, or I am lost for ever. External duties of religion I do perform, but I am a stranger to regeneration. Such inward convictions as these were the knocks and calls of Christ, but they passed away and were forgotten. your convictions are dead, and your hearts the more hardened ; for it is in putting a soul under conviction as it is in putting iron into the fire, and quenching it again, which hardens it the more. You have been near the kingdom of God, but the more miserable for that, if you be shut out at last. The quickening of your convictions is the right way to the saving of your souls. The Lord make you this day to hear his voice.

7. Such as have come hither upon vain or vile accounts, for mere novelty or worse ends ; to catch

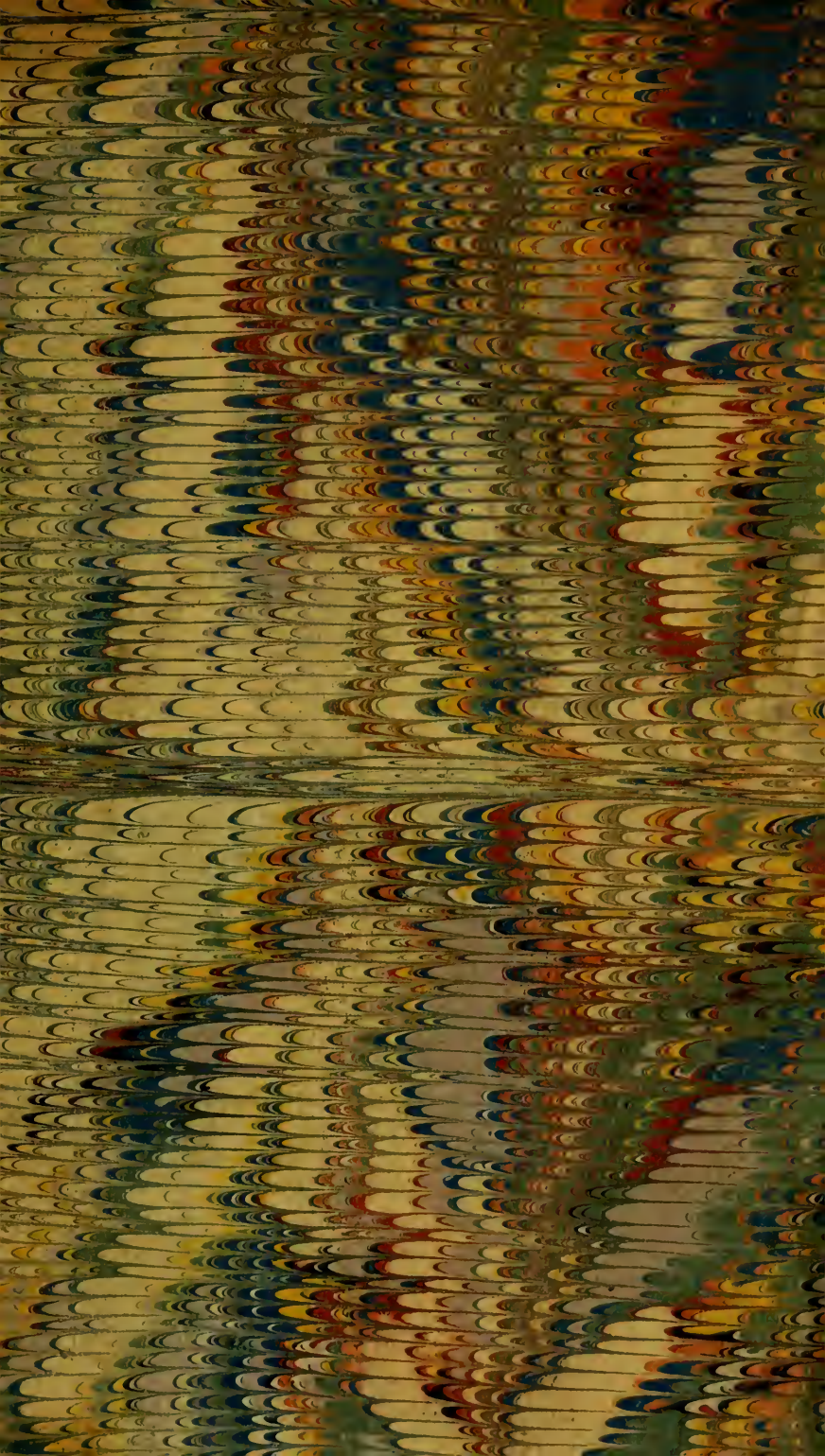
advantages, or reproach the truths of God ; scoffing at the most solemn and awful voice of Christ. The word that you have slighted and reproached, the same shall judge you in that great day, except the Lord will give you repentance unto life, and make the heart tremble under it that hath scoffed at it. “ Be not mockers, lest your bands be made strong.”

8. To conclude ; let all whose hearts the Lord hath opened this day, for the enjoyments of the gospel, the blessed instrument of their salvation, bless the Lord that hath made it a key by regeneration to open the door of salvation to your souls. And as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.

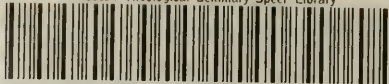
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